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Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994

Introduction

CONTENTS

Citizens Look at the Best and Worst of the Omaha Area 2

Outlook on the Future, Quality of Life, and Local Leadership 8

Fear of Crime and Victimization in the Omaha Area 11

Omaha's Citizens Look at Their Police 15

Omahans' Views on Community Policing and the Importance of Different Policing Activities 20

Omaha Area Citizens Evaluate Library Services . . 25

Home Computers and the Information Superhighway . . 29

Community Contact with the University of Nebraska at Omaha 33

Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, and Self-Employment 37

Survey Methodology 38

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 is the fourth in a series of studies conducted by the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The studies are part of CPAR's initiative to monitor and improve the processes operating in Nebraska's urban areas by developing quality information and making it available to those who need it.

Each Omaha Conditions Survey measures public perception of the quality of life in the Omaha area together with demographic features. In addition, each survey typically focuses on three or four special topics centered around current issues. Past topics have included employment and labor force experiences, health care, crime, and environmental concerns.

Focus topics for the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 were library services, access to information technology, community contact with UNO, and crime and police issues.

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 was conducted through telephone interviews with adults from a random sample of area households. The sample represents adults in the Nebraska portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Cass counties). The survey sample consists of 800 completed interviews conducted between October 10 and November 11, 1994. A detailed description of the survey methodology appears on page 38.

Persons familiar with the Omaha Conditions Survey will note that this year's survey results are published as a single report rather than as a series of separate topical reports. It is hoped that this new format will make the survey results easier to access and use.

Citizens Look at the Best and Worst of the Omaha Area

by

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Center for Public Affairs Research

One of the primary purposes of the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 was to collect information on how residents view the Omaha area and their neighborhoods — what are the best and worst attributes and what problems should leaders be addressing. Because the same questions were asked in 1990, 1991, and 1993 comparisons can be made with the results of the surveys. Two open-ended questions on the survey asked respondents what were their opinions on the three best and the three worst things about the Omaha area. Another open-ended question asked them what they felt are the three most important problems that the Omaha area should be trying to address. Respondents who listed combinations of gangs, drugs, or crime for the worst thing and/or problem were given the opportunity to mention additional items.

Likewise, three similar opinion questions were asked about the respondents' neighborhoods. However, respondents were asked only to give one answer for each question. Comparisons are available only for 1991 and 1993, because the question was not asked in 1990.

The open-ended format was used because it allows respondents to characterize issues in their own words. In addition, open-ended questions make it possible to identify issues and priorities that researchers developing a social survey cannot anticipate.

To classify the open-ended responses, categories were developed, and the responses were placed into one of the categories. All the items in the tables in this report were generated in this manner.

The Best of the Omaha Area

Table 1 presents summary information on the items most often mentioned in response to the question "In your opinion, what are the three best things about the Omaha area?". The summary information is developed by counting the total number of times a particular item was mentioned. These sums, then, are divided by the total number of persons who answered the question and expressed as percentages. (The percentages do not add to 100 percent because each respondent could give up to three

Key Findings

- The five most often mentioned best things about the Omaha area were: jobs and business opportunities (33.8 percent), schools (32.2 percent), friendly people (31.9 percent), entertainment and cultural activities (29.3 percent), and quality of life (22.5 percent).
- The five most often mentioned worst things about the Omaha area were: crime (67.5 percent), street conditions (20.3 percent), gangs (16.0 percent), high taxes (15.3 percent), and local government and its operations (15.1 percent).
- The five most important problems the Omaha area should be trying to address were: crime (75.1 percent), lack of jobs or business opportunities (23.1 percent), gangs (19.4 percent), schools (19.2 percent), and local government (16.8 percent).

Table 1. Respondents' Views of the Best Things About the Omaha Area, 1994

Rank	Percent
1 Jobs and business opportunities	33.8
2 Schools	32.2
3 Friendly people	31.9
4 Entertainment and cultural activities	29.3
5 Quality of life	22.5
6 Low crime rate	17.3
7 Size	17.0
8 Convenient location	15.4
9 Low cost of living	11.4
10 Low traffic volume	10.6
11 Shopping	9.7
12 Quality of the environment and recycling	7.7
13 Climate	5.5
14 Good community feelings	4.8
15 Eating and drinking places	4.2
16 Medical care	3.4
17 Redevelopment efforts	3.3
17 Community organizations and churches	3.3
19 Housing	3.1
20 Law enforcement	2.6
20 Local government	2.6
22 Sports	2.2
23 Parks and recreation facilities	1.6
24 Quality leaders	1.2
Valid cases	764

answers.) All tables in this report are constructed in a similar manner.

Jobs, business opportunities, or other comments about the Omaha economy were mentioned most frequently (33.8 percent) as being the best thing about the Omaha area. Four other attributes were mentioned by 20 percent or more of the respondents: schools (32.2 percent), friendly people or other comments about people (31.9 percent), entertainment and cultural activities (29.3 percent), and quality of life (22.5 percent),

Filling out the top-10 ranks are low crime rate, size of the area, convenient location, low cost of living, and low traffic volume.

Variations in Perceptions of the Best Attributes of the Omaha Area

To better understand respondents' views, the five most frequently mentioned items are examined across population subgroups using characteristics of age, gender, race¹, education, and income. Several interesting patterns are identified and are summarized in the following sections.

Jobs and Business Opportunities.

The largest difference occurred between men and women, with men mentioning jobs and business opportunities more than women. Respondents without a high school diploma compared to those with a college degree, those earning more than \$20,000 per year, and persons younger than 65 also were more likely to mention jobs. The highest percentage

of persons mentioning jobs were aged 18 to 24 and those who did not have a high school diploma.

Schools. Schools were mentioned most frequently by persons aged 25 to 49 (persons who were likely to have children in school) in contrast to those either younger or older. Persons with college degrees compared to those without a high school diploma and persons in households with incomes \$20,000 or higher compared to those with incomes below \$20,000 also mentioned schools more frequently.

Friendly People. Respondents with a high school diploma but no college, compared to everyone else, were more likely to mention friendly people as one of the best things about the Omaha area. This item did not vary much by race, sex, income, or age of respondent.

Entertainment and Cultural Activities. The largest difference in this item occurred between Blacks and Whites, with white respondents more likely to mention entertainment and cultural activities. Women mentioned this item more than men, and persons with a high school diploma or more education mentioned this item more than those without a diploma.

Quality of Life. White respondents and those with incomes less than \$20,000 were less likely to mention quality of life as one of the best aspects of the Omaha area. On the other hand, black respondents, and persons in households with incomes above \$50,000 were more likely to mention quality of life.

Comparisons with 1990, 1991, and 1993

Table 2 presents comparisons among the list of the best attributes from the 1990, 1991, and 1993 as well as the 1994 survey. The lists are not the same because some items have been added or deleted between the surveys. Generally there is a great deal of similarity among the years, both in terms of ranking and the percentage of respondents mentioning an item. The top five items have been the same for all four years, although the order varies from year to year.

The major difference is that jobs and business opportunities moved to the most mentioned item in 1994. Another change is the increase in the ranking of schools, moving from fifth to second. Quality of life fell during the period. Some of this could be due to the fact that in 1994 we developed a new category for people who mentioned the size of the area. Some of this category could have fallen in the quality of life category in previous surveys.

Entering the top ten again this year was low cost of living. On the other hand, shopping dropped out of the top ten for the first time this year. Quality of the environment also dropped out of the top ten.

Table 2. Respondents' Views of the Ten Best Things About the Omaha Area, 1990 to 1994

1994		1993		1991		1990	
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
1 Jobs and business opportunities	33.8	3	31.2	4	26.8	4	26.4
2 Schools	32.2	5	22.5	1	29.8	1	30.4
3 Friendly people	31.9	1	35.5	2	29.2	3	28.1
4 Entertainment and cultural activities	29.3	4	22.9	5	18.8	5	20.6
5 Quality of life	22.5	2	34.3	3	27.7	2	30.3
6 Low crime rate	17.3	7	13.9	10	9.0	13	6.6
7 Size	17.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
8 Convenient location	15.4	6	14.0	7	13.2	7	10.5
9 Low cost of living	11.4	11	10.6	8	11.6	7	10.9
10 Low traffic volume	10.6	8	12.7	13	6.9	10	9.3
Valid cases	764		757		607		738

The Worst of the Omaha Area

Table 3 summarizes the attributes mentioned in response to the question, "In your opinion, what are the three worst things about the Omaha area?". The data are developed using the same procedure described earlier. Table 3 shows that crime overwhelmingly was perceived to be the worst thing about the Omaha area, as two out of three respondents (67.5 percent) mentioned this item. Crime was mentioned more than three times as often as the second-most mentioned item. Because youth crime has become a focus of state and local policymakers, Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 also broke this category out separately. Of the 67.5 percent listed above, 10.6 percent mentioned youth crime.

Table 3. Respondents' Views of the Worst Things About the Omaha Area, 1994

Rank	Percent
1 Crime	67.5
2 Street conditions	20.3
3 Gangs	16.0
4 High taxes	15.3
5 Local government	15.1
6 Traffic congestion	12.1
7 Limited entertainment	10.4
8 Weather	9.4
9 Lack of jobs or business opportunities	8.7
10 Suburban and urban development	6.7
11 Poor leaders	6.2
12 Law enforcement	5.9
13 Discrimination	5.6
14 Poor schools	5.5
15 Low wages and incomes	5.4
16 No youth activities	5.2
17 Quality of the environment and recycling	4.2
18 Location and natural resources	3.7
18 Family values	3.7
18 Drugs	3.7
21 Public transportation	2.2
21 Community attitude	2.2
23 People	2.0
24 Cost of living	1.7
25 Run-down neighborhoods	1.6
25 No community cooperation	1.6
25 Homelessness	1.6
27 Mass media	1.3
28 Labor shortage	1.0
Valid cases	763

Following second was street conditions at 20.3 percent. (This includes comments related to smoothness of streets and road construction, as well as traffic engineering.) Gangs were mentioned by 16.0 percent of the respondents. Rounding out the top five were high taxes (15.3 percent) and comments about local government or its operations (15.1 percent).

Of the remaining items in the ten worst things about the Omaha area, two items were also mentioned among the best things — jobs and business opportunities and entertainment. The other items in the top ten are traffic congestion, weather, and issues relating to suburban and urban development.

Variations in Perceptions of the Worst Attributes of the Omaha Area

In the following sections, the five items ranked as the worst things about the Omaha area are compared across characteristics of the respondents. These are the same characteristics that were used in the previous section (age, gender, race, education, and income).

Crime. The perception of crime as one of the worst things about the Omaha area exhibited the most variation among the demographic groups considered. Crime was more likely to be mentioned by women, Whites, and persons in households with incomes below \$30,000. Comparing ages, persons 65 or older were most worried about crime, while those aged 35 to 49 were least worried. About three of every four older persons mentioned crime as one of the worst things about the Omaha area.

Street Conditions. Respondents who were aged 25 to 64 or who were in households with incomes above \$30,000 were more likely to list street conditions. Little variation occurred among the other subgroups.

Gangs. Black respondents and persons in the 35 to 49 year old age group were most likely to be concerned about gangs.

High Taxes. The perception of high taxes as one of the worst things about the Omaha area varied by race, education, and income. This item was more likely to have been mentioned by

Whites, as education levels increased, and as household incomes increased.

Local Government. Respondents who indicated local government as one of the worst aspects of the Omaha area were more likely to be aged 65 or older and less likely to be aged 18 to 24. Responses varied little by race, sex, income, or education.

Comparisons with 1990, 1991, and 1993

Although there is no difference in the ranking of the first four items between 1993 and 1994, the percentages of respondents who mentioned crime increased considerably. In 1994, the percentage of persons mentioning it grew from 41.4 percent to 67.5 percent. The 1994 percentage was four times as large as the 16.9 percent recorded in 1991 (see table 4).

It is interesting to look at what has happened to the perception of drugs as being the worst thing about the Omaha area. In 1990, it was the first most mentioned item, but dropped out of the top ten in 1993 and fell to 18th in 1994. During this four-year period, the percentage of respondents mentioning drugs as one of the worst things in the Omaha area fell from 29.1 percent to 3.7 percent.

Lack of youth activities and run-down neighborhoods dropped out of the top ten in 1994. Moving into the top ten were limited entertainment and cultural activities and suburban and urban development.

Most Important Problems to Address

When asked what they felt were the three most important problems that the Omaha area should be trying to address, crime was mentioned by 75.1 percent of the respondents (see table 5). Similar to the discussion above, youth crime was broken out separately. As a priority problem, youth crime was mentioned by 10.9 percent of the respondents. No other item came close to crime in being mentioned as a priority problem. Lack of jobs or business opportunities was mentioned second most frequently (23.1 percent), but had one-third as many respondents mentioning this item.

Table 4. Respondents' Views of the Ten Worst Things About the Omaha Area, 1991 to 1994

1994		1993		1991		1990	
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
1 Crime	67.5	1	41.4	5	16.9	4	18.8
2 Street conditions	20.3	2	31.5	1	30.6	5	18.0
3 Gangs	16.0	3	21.1	2	24.4	1	28.1
4 High taxes	15.3	4	14.4	3	20.8	3	20.4
5 Local government	15.1	7	10.9	7	12.9	--	--
6 Traffic congestion	12.1	6	12.6	9	10.1	8	9.2
7 Limited entertainment	10.4	13	6.9	12	5.1	10	6.5
8 Weather	9.4	5	13.6	8	11.3	6	14.5
9 Lack of jobs or business opportunities	8.7	7	10.9	10	8.3	7	10.4
10 Suburban and urban development	6.7	15	5.7	13	4.2	12	5.1
Valid cases	763		752		594		727

It is interesting to note that both crime and jobs and business opportunities were ranked among the ten most frequently best things, worst things, and problems to be addressed in the Omaha area.

No other item was mentioned by more than 20 percent of the respondents, but three were mentioned by more than 15 percent: gangs (19.4 percent), schools (19.2 percent), and local government or its operations (16.8 percent).

Rounding out the list of priority problems are high taxes, lack of family values, youth needs, and drugs.

Variations in the Perceptions of the Most Important Problems

The five issues mentioned most frequently by the respondents are also compared across demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Crime. Crime was more likely to be mentioned as a priority problem by Whites or persons with some college or a college degree as opposed to those with less than a high school diploma.

Lack of Jobs or Business Opportunities. As a priority problem lack of jobs or business opportunities was viewed as most important by Blacks, college graduates, men, persons in households with incomes over \$50,000, and persons aged 35 to 49. Persons 65 or older or under 25 and those with a high school diploma only were less likely to mention jobs as a priority issue.

Gangs. The perception of gangs as a priority problem showed little variation among the demographic categories.

Schools. Respondents who mentioned schools as a priority problem were more likely to be white, have a high school diploma or more education, and fall in the 18 to 24 age group.

Local Government. Perceptions of government as a priority problem also varied by race, with Whites mentioning it more often than Blacks. Local government also was mentioned more by respondents without a high school diploma and persons 25 or older, especially persons aged 65 or older.

Comparisons with 1990, 1991, and 1993

Of the three open-ended questions asked, priority problems to be addressed showed the most movement among the top five issues between 1993 and 1994 (table 6). Although the table shows that the top three items remained the same, with crime dominating the concerns of Omaha area residents, schools and local government moved into the top five for the first time. Lack of jobs or business opportunities moved from third to second, and gangs went from second to third. Dropping out of the top five were youth needs and street conditions.

Much of the movement in these issues might be explained by attention given them by the media. At the time of the 1991 survey, the Omaha Effort generated considerable controversy and media attention and may have led to an

Table 5. Respondents' Views of the Priority Problems to Address in the Omaha Area, 1994

Rank	Percent
1 Crime	75.1
2 Lack of jobs or business opportunities	23.1
3 Gangs	19.4
4 Quality of schools	19.2
5 Local government	16.8
6 Street conditions	14.6
7 High taxes	14.1
8 Family values	10.4
9 Youth needs	9.2
10 Drugs	8.3
11 Street congestion	6.0
12 Law enforcement	5.9
13 Suburban and urban development	5.3
14 Low incomes	4.0
15 Homelessness	3.8
16 Lack of entertainment and cultural activities	3.6
17 Discrimination	3.1
18 Welfare	2.9
19 Quality of the environment and recycling	2.8
19 Poor leaders	2.8
21 Public transportation	2.3
22 Downtown area	2.2
23 Sense of community	2.1
24 Health care	1.7
25 Housing	1.5
26 Busing in schools	1.2
27 Run-down neighborhoods	1.0
27 Attitude	1.0
Valid Cases	780

Table 6. Respondents' Views of the Ten Priority Problems to Address in the Omaha Area, 1991 to 1994

1994		1993		1991		1990	
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
1 Crime	75.1	1	42.3	6	19.5	3	19.6
2 Lack of jobs or business opportunities	23.1	3	25.8	7	16.5	5	16.6
3 Gangs	19.4	2	29.4	1	33.5	2	38.9
4 Quality of schools	19.2	8	13.3	9	10.4	9	10.0
5 Local government	16.8	11	9.4	8	10.9	17	3.0
6 Street conditions	14.6	4	20.2	5	20.8	7	14.1
7 High taxes	14.1	6	15.0	4	21.3	4	18.7
8 Family values	10.4	—	—	—	—	—	—
9 Youth needs	9.2	5	18.8	10	8.2	8	11.3
10 Drugs	8.3	7	13.7	2	31.7	1	51.0
Valid Cases	780		768		605		759

increased awareness of the environment and recycling. In 1993, much attention began to be focused on crime and youth violence as Omaha hosted a conference on youth violence. Also during the 1994 election campaigns, crime was a major item of discussion. This election also focused attention on local government, especially with the resignation of Omaha's mayor.

Perceptions of the Best, the Worst, and the Most Important Problems in the Respondent's Neighborhood

In addition to being asked several questions concerning the Omaha area, respondents were asked to give their views of the neighborhoods. In contrast to the Omaha area, respondents were asked to list only one item for their neighborhood. Therefore, the percentages are not comparable between the Omaha area and neighborhood. Because of the small number of responses for some categories, the three tables in this section list only the ten most frequently mentioned items in 1994, along with their comparisons to 1991 and 1993.

In comparing tables 7-9, an interesting pattern emerges. People are much more likely to say something good about their neighborhood than they are to list something bad or a problem. Almost everyone surveyed (773 respondents) mentioned something good about their neighborhood, but only 547 said

something bad, and 565 listed a priority problem.

Best Things About My Neighborhood

By far the best things about neighborhoods in the Omaha area were their friendly people (25.6 percent) and their quality of life (23.3 percent). Nearly half of the respondents stated one of these attributes. Low crime rate was indicated by another 14.6 percent, and convenient location by 11.8 percent. Other aspects of their neighborhood that respondents mentioned as the best are its size, quality of the environment, good community feelings, schools, low traffic volume, and the availability of

jobs and business opportunities (see table 7).

Many of the things that respondents like about the Omaha area they also like about their neighborhood. Only quality of the environment and good community feelings are not also among the ten best things about the Omaha area.

Table 7 shows that the best things about their neighborhood have not changed much since 1991. Size was a new category added in 1994 and jobs and business opportunities entered the top ten for the first time.

Table 7. Respondents' Views of the Ten Best Things About Their Neighborhood, 1991 to 1994

1994		1993		1991	
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
1 Friendly people	25.6	1	28.4	2	27.9
2 Quality of life*	23.3	2	25.9	1	28.7
3 Low crime rate	14.6	4	10.5	4	7.4
4 Convenient location	11.8	3	12.3	3	12.1
5 Size	6.2	—	—	—	—
6 Quality of the environment and recycling	5.2	5	7.1	6	5.2
7 Good community feelings	5.0	7	4.5	7	3.5
8 Schools	2.2	8	2.7	8	3.0
9 Low traffic volume	1.2	9	2.2	12	1.2
10 Jobs and business opportunities	1.0	—	—	—	—
Valid cases	773		772		595

*Includes slow-paced lifestyle in 1991 and 1993.

Worst Things About My Neighborhood

Table 8 shows that there was a wider variety of responses given as the worst thing about neighborhoods. This diversity lowers the overall percentage of responses for individual items. Crime replaced traffic congestion as the top worst thing, but received only 17.6 percent of the responses. Traffic congestion was mentioned by 15.2 percent of the respondents.

Again there are many items that respondents mentioned as the worst things in their neighborhood and the worst things in the Omaha area. Respondents felt that crime, traffic congestion, street conditions, high taxes, run-down areas, suburban and urban development,

and gangs were bad in their neighborhood and bad in the Omaha area.

Compared to previous years, crime and people in the neighborhood exhibited some of the largest changes.

Priority Problems to Address in My Neighborhood

Just as it was for the Omaha area, crime was perceived to be the biggest problem in the respondents' neighborhoods, mentioned by 40.7 percent of them. As shown in table 9, this is nearly double the percent from 1993. Because of the large percent of respondents mentioning crime, no other issue stands out as a problem to be addressed in their neighborhood.

Comparing table 9 to table 6 shows which neighborhood problems also were among the top ten for the Omaha area. In addition to crime, family values, gangs, high taxes, street conditions, youth needs, and quality of schools were viewed as priority problems that should be addressed by the neighborhood and the Omaha area.

Also in table 9 are comparisons to 1993. As in the previous sections, there is much overlap between the two years. However, crime exhibited a large increase in the percentage of respondents mentioning it, even though its ranking did not change. Quality of the environment was the only item to drop out of the top ten between the two years.

Endnote

1. This analysis reports differences in responses across various population sub-groups. Comparison across racial/ethnic groups report differences between Whites and Blacks. Other racial/ethnic groups were included in the survey and are reported in metropolitan totals. However, the number of respondents in each of these groups was too small for separate analysis.

Table 8. Respondents' Views of the Ten Worst Things About Their Neighborhood, 1991 to 1994

1994		1993		1991	
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
1	Crime	4	8.5	5	5.8
2	Traffic congestion	1	16.3	2	9.1
3	People	6	6.7	6	4.7
4	Street conditions	3	13.5	1	14.1
5	Location/natural resources	—	—	—	—
6	Run-down areas	9	3.0	9	3.1
7	High taxes	8	3.3	4	5.9
8	Suburban and urban development	4	8.5	12	2.4
9	Gangs	10	2.2	18	1.3
10	Sense of community	—	—	—	—
10	Low incomes	—	—	—	—
10	Family values	—	—	—	—
Valid cases		547		539	
				384	

Table 9. Respondents' Views of the Ten Priority Problems to Address in Their Neighborhood, 1991 to 1994

1994		1993		1991		
Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent	
1	Crime	40.7	1	21.4	2	13.1
2	Traffic congestion	7.6	4	5.9	11	2.6
3	Sense of community	6.7	6	5.6	7	3.6
4	Family values	5.3	—	—	—	—
5	Gangs	5.0	10	2.0	13	2.4
6	High taxes	3.7	7	2.7	8	3.3
7	Run-down areas	3.5	—	—	—	—
8	Street conditions	3.4	5	5.7	3	10.1
9	Youth needs	3.2	3	9.3	5	4.4
10	Quality of schools	2.5	8	2.6	20	1.2
10	Suburban and urban development	2.5	9	2.4	9	3.2
Valid cases		565	557	346		

Outlook on the Future, Quality of Life, and Local Leadership

by

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Center for Public Affairs Research**

How do residents rate the Omaha area on its outlook for the future, quality of life, need for change, quality of leadership, and retention of high school graduates?

The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 asked respondents to indicate their levels of agreement with seven statements about these facets of life in the greater Omaha area. Respondents were read each statement after which they were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

This report presents the results obtained from all 800 respondents in the Omaha area. It also identifies differences in opinion, if any, among population subgroups based on age, race,¹ sex, education, and household income. In addition, it notes any differences in opinion among persons based on their location in 11 geographic sub-areas within the Omaha area.

Table 1 summarizes respondents' levels of agreement with each of the seven statements about the Omaha area.

Outlook on the Future

About nine out of ten respondents (90.7 percent) said they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "The Omaha area's future looks bright."

The outlook on the future varied according to race, sex, and income as well as according to geographic sub-area.

Among Black respondents, 71.7 percent felt that the Omaha area's future was bright compared with 92.6 percent of White respondents. Women were slightly less optimistic about the future than men (87.8 percent versus 93.9 percent). People with lower household incomes tended to be less optimistic

about the future of the Omaha area than people with higher household incomes.

Map 1 shows differences in the levels of agreement to this statement by geographic sub-area.

Omaha as a Place to Live

Over eight out of ten respondents (84.6 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "The Omaha area is an ideal place to live."

Respondents' opinions of the Omaha area as an ideal place to live varied by income and geographic sub-area.

Three out of four respondents with household incomes of less than \$20,000 per year (75.0 percent) felt the Omaha area was an ideal place to live compared with 87.1 percent of those with household incomes of \$20,000 per year and over.

Map 2 shows differences in levels of agreement to the statement that the Omaha area is an ideal place to live by geographic sub-area.

Key Findings

- Over 9 out of 10 (90.7 percent) agree that the future of the Omaha area looks bright, and 84.6 percent agree that the area is an ideal place to live.
- Regarding the need for change, 41.3 percent agree that most area residents are satisfied with things as they are; 18.5 percent agree that the area is good enough as it is without trying to change it.
- About two-thirds (67.2 percent) agree with the statement that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders. A higher percentage (87.8 percent) agree that the area has good corporate leaders.
- About 6 out of 10 (60.6 percent) agree that younger residents tend to stay in the Omaha area after completing high school.
- Blacks and women are less optimistic about the Omaha area's future, and they are more likely to see a need for change.
- Respondents in 1994 were less likely to agree that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders and more likely to see a need for change than were respondents in 1993.

The Need for Change

Although the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that the Omaha area has a bright future and is an ideal place to live, most also seemed to feel a need for change. Two statements measured attitudes towards the need for change in the Omaha area. The first was, "Most residents of the Omaha area are satisfied with things the way they are," and the second was, "The Omaha area is good enough as it is without trying to change it."

Approximately four out of ten respondents (41.3 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that most residents are satisfied with things as they are.

Levels of agreement with this statement varied by age, race, sex, education, and geographic sub-area.

Persons aged 50 to 64 were least likely to agree that most residents are satisfied with things as they are. Most likely to agree were persons aged 25 to 34. Blacks were half as likely to agree with the statement as Whites. Women were less likely to agree than men. Persons with a high school education only or with some college were less likely to agree than persons with less than a high school education or college graduates.

Map 3 shows differences in levels of agreement to the statement that most Omaha area residents are satisfied with things as they are by geographic sub-area.

While four out of ten respondents felt most residents are satisfied with things as they are, fewer than two out of ten (18.5 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the area is good enough as it is.

Levels of agreement with the statement that the Omaha area is good enough as it is varied by race, sex, and geographic sub-area.

Only 6.3 percent of Blacks strongly agreed or agreed with this statement compared with 18.8 percent of Whites. Again, women were less likely to agree than were men.

Map 4 shows differences in levels of agreement to the statement that the Omaha area is good enough as it is by geographic sub-area.

Quality of Leadership

Two statements focused on the quality of leadership in the Omaha area: "The Omaha area has good governmental leaders" and "The Omaha area has good corporate leaders."

About two thirds of respondents (67.2 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders.

Respondents' levels of agreement with this statement varied only by age.

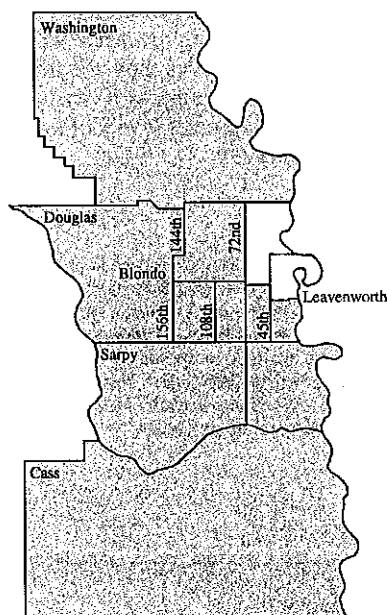
Least likely to agree that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders were persons aged 50 to 64. Most likely to agree were persons aged 18 to 24 followed closely by persons aged 25 to 34.

The quality of corporate leadership was rated higher than the quality of government leadership. Just under nine out of ten respondents (87.8 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha area has good corporate leaders.

While opinions of government leadership varied only by age, opinions of corporate leadership varied by age, race, education, and household income.

By age, agreement with the statement that the Omaha area has good corporate leaders was lowest among persons aged 35 to 49. It was highest among persons aged 25 to 34. Blacks were less likely to agree with the statement than were Whites. Persons with less than a high school education were less likely to

Map 1. Percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement, "The Omaha area's future looks bright."



Map 2. Percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement, "The Omaha area is an ideal place to live."

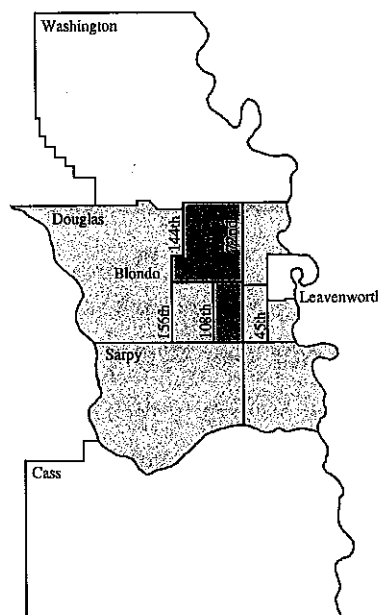
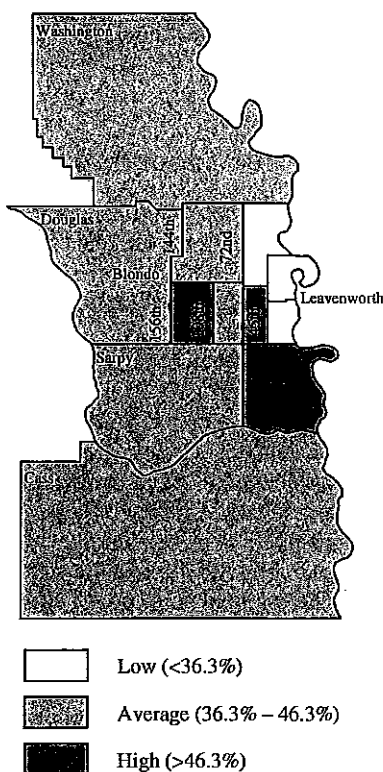


Table 1. Levels of Agreement with Statements About the Omaha Area

Statement About the Omaha Area	Number				Percent			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Future looks bright	135	571	63	9	17.4	73.4	8.1	1.2
An ideal place to live	11	555	101	20	14.2	70.4	12.8	2.5
Most residents are satisfied with things as they are	8	303	393	49	1.1	40.2	52.2	6.5
Good enough as it is without trying to change it	9	136	542	98	1.1	17.3	69.0	12.5
Has good governmental leaders	11	470	204	31	1.5	65.6	28.5	4.3
Has good corporate leaders	77	547	78	9	10.8	76.9	11.0	1.3
Younger residents tend to stay here after high school	11	367	221	25	1.8	58.8	35.4	4.0

Map 3. Percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement, "Most residents of the Omaha area are satisfied with things the way they are."



agree with the statement than persons with a college education; levels of agreement increased as education increased. Likewise, levels of agreement increased as household income increased.

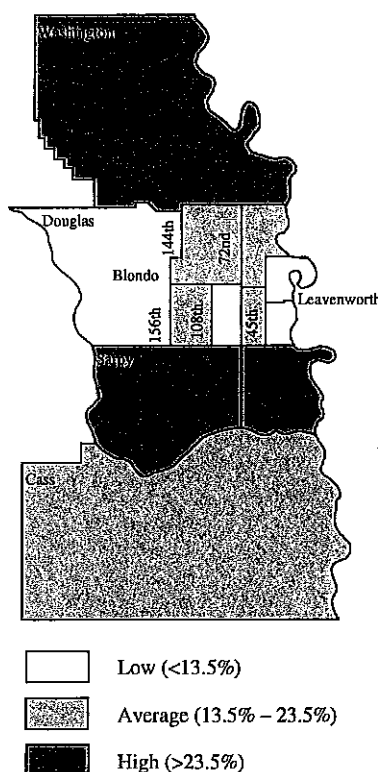
Retention of Younger Residents After High School

Roughly six out of ten respondents (60.6 percent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Younger residents of the Omaha area tend to stay here after completing high school."

Respondents' levels of agreement with this statement differed by age, race, and education.

Persons aged 65 and older were least likely to agree that younger residents tend to stay in the area after completing high school. Most likely to agree were persons aged 25 to 34. Blacks were less likely to agree than were Whites. Persons with college degrees were less

Map 4. Percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement, "The Omaha area is good enough as it is without trying to change it."



likely to agree than were persons with less than a high school education (51.1 percent versus 72.1 percent).

Historical Comparison with 1993 and 1990 Results

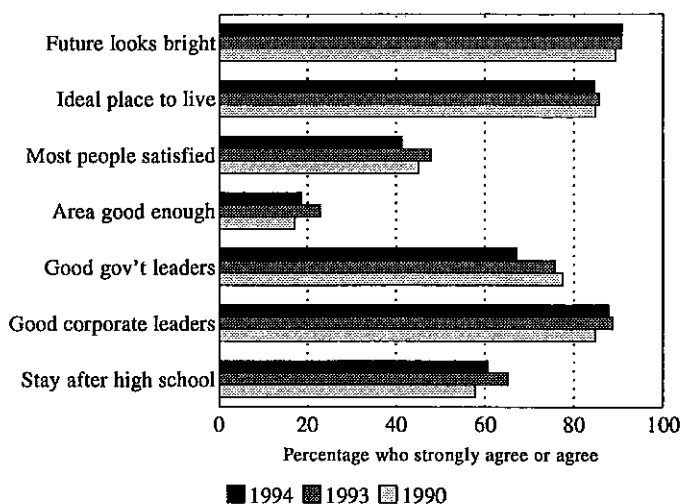
Chart 1 compares Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 results with those from 1993 and 1990.

In general, levels of agreement with the seven statements have not varied dramatically from one survey to the next. Nevertheless, a couple of comparisons are noteworthy. First, the percentage of respondents agreeing that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders was smaller in the 1994 survey than in either of the prior surveys. It was over ten percent lower than in 1990. This may be at least partly attributable to the timing of the 1994 survey interviews which took place during the fall 1994 election season. Second, the statements suggesting that most residents are satisfied with things as they are and that the area is good enough as it is without change both had lower levels of agreement than in 1993.

Endnote

1. This analysis reports differences in responses across various population sub-groups. Comparison across racial/ethnic groups report differences between Whites and Blacks. Other racial/ethnic groups were included in the survey and are reported in metropolitan totals. However, the number of respondents in each of these groups was too small for separate analysis.

Chart 1. Historical Comparison Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994, 1993, and 1990



Fear of Crime and Victimization in the Omaha Area

by
**Vincent Webb, Chairperson, and
 Charles Katz, Graduate Assistant**
 Department of Criminal Justice

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 included questions on fear of crime, perceptions of change in the crime situation, and citizen victimization for selected property crimes. This report summarizes the 1994 survey results. Because the same questions were asked, these findings can be compared to the findings from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1990.¹ The findings are examined across population subgroups using characteristics of age, race, household income, education and sex to uncover patterns in the survey responses. The findings are also examined for variations across geographical areas. Map 1 shows the survey analysis areas.

Fear of Crime in the Omaha Area

Findings on respondents' fear of crime are summarized in table 1. These findings show that fear of crime among

Omaha area residents is high; 56.0 percent of the respondents reported being very worried about crime in the Omaha area. This is a substantial increase from 1990 when only 47.0 percent of the respondents were very worried about crime in the Omaha area. Only 5.5 percent of the respondents in the 1994 survey reported that they were not at all worried about crime in the Omaha area. This compares to 8.4 percent of the respondents in the 1990 survey.

Variations in Reporting Fear of Crime in the Omaha Area

Fear of crime for respondents of the 1994 survey varies across population subgroups. These patterns are similar to the ones found in 1990. Older respondents tend to be more worried about crime than younger respondents. Respondents from lower income levels tend to be more worried than those from

higher income levels. Fear of crime is not consistently related to education.

Female respondents tend to be more worried about crime than male respondents. Only 2.9 of the women surveyed said they are not at all worried about crime versus 8.3 percent of the men.

Approximately the same percentage of white and nonwhite respondents in 1994 are very worried about crime (56.1 percent and 57.7 percent, respectively). One interesting finding has to do with the comparison of 1994 and 1990 results for race. The percentage of Whites who said they are very worried about crime increased from 44.7 percent in 1990 to 56.1 percent in 1994. But for Non-whites, the percentage decreased from 70.4 percent to 57.7 percent.

The greatest change in the percentage of respondents who said they were very worried about crime was for those in the \$40,000 and over income category. Just over one-third (35.2 percent) of the 1990 respondents in that income category reported that they were very worried about crime, but the percentage was 51.9 in 1994.

The percentage of citizens who said they are very worried about crime ranged from 70.8 percent of the respondents in Area A to 45.1 percent of the respondents in Area G (see table 3 and map 1).

Perception of Change in the Crime Situation

In both the 1994 and 1990 surveys Omaha area residents were asked to indicate if they thought the area's crime situation had changed over the past few years. The vast majority of area residents (84.0 percent) believe that the

Key Findings

- Over 9 of every 10 respondents reported being worried about crime in the Omaha area.
- In 1994, 56.0 percent of respondents said they are very worried about crime; in 1990 only 47.0 percent were very worried.
- Over 8 of every 10 respondents indicated the crime situation in the Omaha area has changed for the worse over the past few years.
- Victimization levels reported by respondents for completed and attempted burglary and for household and personal larceny are about the same in 1994 as in 1990.

Table 1. Responses to the Question: "Are you very worried, a little worried, or not at all worried about crime?", 1994 and 1990

	Very Worried			A Little Worried			Not At All Worried		
	1994	1990	Percent Change	1994	1990	Percent Change	1994	1990	Percent Change
Total	56.0	47.0	19.1	38.4	44.5	-13.7	5.5	8.4	-34.5
Age:									
18-34	53.2	45.6	16.7	41.1	47.0	-12.6	5.7	7.4	-23.0
35-64	57.1	45.7	24.9	38.1	44.3	-14.0	4.8	10.0	-52.0
65 and over	59.2	55.0	7.6	33.3	38.8	-14.2	7.5	6.2	21.0
Race:									
White	56.1	44.7	19.1	38.5	46.5	-17.2	5.3	8.0	-33.7
Nonwhite	57.7	70.4	-18.0	34.6	25.4	36.2	7.7	4.2	83.3
Household Income:									
Under \$20,000	61.9	56.9	8.8	30.2	35.8	-14.0	7.9	7.3	8.2
\$20,000-39,999	59.0	46.6	26.6	35.9	43.8	-18.0	5.1	9.5	-46.3
\$40,000 and over	51.9	35.2	47.4	44.1	56.0	-21.2	4.0	8.8	-54.5
Education:									
Less than high school	55.4	65.4	-15.3	30.4	29.6	2.7	14.3	4.9	191.8
High school diploma only	68.1	54.0	26.1	27.3	36.6	-25.4	4.6	9.4	-51.1
At least some college	51.3	40.7	26.0	43.7	50.8	-14.0	5.0	8.5	-41.2
Sex:									
Male	44.5	36.4	22.3	47.1	52.9	-11.0	8.3	10.6	-21.7
Female	66.7	56.2	18.7	30.4	37.4	-18.7	2.9	6.4	-54.7

situation has changed for the worse. Only 1.9 percent believe that the situation has changed for the better. This compares to 1990 when 73.8 percent thought it had grown worse and 2.7 percent thought it was better.

Victimization in the Omaha Area

Two major methods of measuring crime are used in the United States. The oldest method is the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system which relies on crimes reported to the police. The other is the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) which asks nearly 110,000 people living in 60,000 households about their victimization experiences. Both methods of measuring crime are needed in order to construct an accurate picture of crime since much crime is never reported to the police. UCR data underestimate the total amount of crime and NCVS data capture crime not reported to the police. The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 included four questions from the NCVS. These same questions were used in the 1990 survey.

Respondents were asked about the occurrence of selected property crimes during a specific six month period. Responses to the victimization questions are examined across population subgroups and geographic areas, and significant patterns for each selected crime are reported in the following sections.

For the most part, victimization levels for property crimes remain low in Omaha and have not changed much since 1990. There is considerable variation across geographical area. Survey data indicate that in 1994 victimization for household burglary was eight times higher in some neighborhoods than in others, and victimization for household larceny was nearly ten times higher in some neighborhoods than in others.

Household Burglary: Completed

Table 2 shows that 6.0 percent of the respondents in the 1994 survey reported a completed household burglary during the past six months. Younger respondents were somewhat more likely to report a household burglary than older respondents. Whites and Nonwhites were about equally likely to report a household burglary. Respondents living in a household with income between \$20,000 and

\$39,999 were more likely to report being the victim of a household burglary than those living in households with either a higher or a lower household income. Differences in victimization levels for household burglary among respondents from different education levels are small, and about the same percentage of males and females reported victimization.

The data in table 3 indicate that victimization levels for completed burglaries were highest in Area H (19.6 percent) and lowest in Area B (2.0 percent).

There is little change between 1990 and 1994, and there are few significant changes in the distribution of victimizations across population subgroups when the two years are compared. The most apparent change is for Nonwhites: in 1990, 18.3 percent reported being the victim of a household burglary, but in 1994 the percentage decreased to 6.4 percent.

Household Burglary: Attempted

Attempted household burglaries during the past six months were reported for 6.5 percent of the households in the 1994 survey. This is nearly the same percentage as in 1990 when attempted burglaries were reported for 6.4 percent of the households. Differences across population subgroups are small with the most

notable difference being for education. The percent of attempted burglaries increases as the level of education increases. Respondents 65 years and older were the least likely to report an attempted burglary.

Levels of victimization for attempted burglary ranged from a high of 15.7 percent of households in Area I to a low of 2.0 percent of the households in Area K.

Household Larceny

Household larceny includes items such as lawn furniture, lawn mowers, and bicycles being stolen from outside a residence. Table 2 indicates that 15.3 percent of the 1994 respondents reported a household larceny which is about the same as reported in the 1990 survey (14.9 percent).

Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to report being the victim of a household larceny during the past six months, and nonwhite respondents were more likely than white respondents to report being a victim. This is the same pattern that was found in 1990.

Victimization levels for household larceny ranged from a high of 31.4 percent

Table 2. Victimization in the Omaha Area for Selected Property Crimes, 1994 and 1990

	Household Burglary: Completed			House Burglary: Attempted			Household Larceny			Personal Larceny		
	1994	1990	Percent Change	1994	1990	Percent Change	1994	1990	Percent Change	1994	1990	Percent Change
Total	6.0	7.6	-21.1	6.5	6.4	1.6	15.3	14.9	3.1	7.8	5.6	39.3
Age:												
18-34	8.1	13.5	-40.0	7.7	8.1	-4.9	19.7	21.3	-7.5	9.0	7.4	21.6
35-64	5.3	5.1	3.9	7.5	6.6	13.6	14.7	13.4	9.7	8.4	4.8	75.0
65 and over	3.3	0.8	312.5	0.8	2.3	-65.2	6.7	4.6	45.7	3.3	3.8	-13.2
Race:												
White	5.9	6.5	-9.2	6.7	5.7	17.5	14.5	13.8	5.1	7.1	5.7	24.6
Nonwhite	6.4	18.3	-65.0	5.1	14.1	-63.8	21.8	26.8	-18.7	14.1	5.6	151.8
Household Income:												
Under \$20,000	4.3	10.0	-57.0	5.8	9.1	-36.3	16.5	13.7	20.4	6.5	4.1	58.5
\$20,000-39,999	10.5	7.4	41.9	9.0	6.4	40.6	14.9	18.4	-19.0	9.8	4.9	100.0
\$40,000 and over	3.1	6.7	-53.7	5.9	4.1	43.9	15.2	12.9	17.8	7.2	7.2	0.0
Education:												
Less than high school	3.6	7.4	-51.4	3.6	6.2	-41.9	16.4	14.8	10.8	3.6	6.2	-41.9
High school diploma only	5.6	7.6	-26.3	5.6	7.1	-21.1	17.1	16.1	6.2	7.9	4.5	75.6
At least some college	6.5	7.6	-14.5	7.2	6.1	18.0	14.3	14.3	0.0	8.0	6.1	31.1
Sex:												
Male	6.3	6.1	3.3	7.3	6.1	19.7	17.4	14.8	17.6	8.9	5.0	78.0
Female	5.8	8.8	-34.1	5.8	6.7	-13.4	13.3	15.0	-11.3	6.8	6.2	9.7

Table 3. Percentage of Responses to Fear of Crime and Victimization Questions by Area, 1994

Area													
	Metro Area	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Percent													
How worried are you about crime?													
Very worried	56.0	70.8	57.1	56.7	56.8	54.8	62.3	45.1	51.0	65.7	60.9	51.5	55.2
A little worried	38.4	25.0	38.8	40.0	42.0	38.1	34.4	49.3	43.1	27.1	34.8	42.4	24.1
Not at all worried	5.5	4.2	4.1	3.3	1.2	7.1	3.3	5.6	5.9	7.1	4.3	6.1	20.7
Victimization													
Burglary, Completed	6.0	4.2	2.0	3.3	8.5	5.6	4.9	4.2	19.6	8.6	4.3	3.1	3.4
Burglary, Attempted	6.5	4.2	4.1	7.8	11.0	4.0	3.3	5.6	9.8	15.7	2.2	2.0	10.3
Household Larceny	15.3	4.2	22.4	10.0	24.4	17.5	3.3	14.1	31.4	18.6	10.9	10.2	10.3
Personal Larceny	7.8	4.2	8.2	7.8	12.2	8.0	6.6	11.3	9.8	5.7	6.7	6.1	0.0

of the households in Area H to a low of 3.3 percent of the households in Area F.

Personal Larceny

Personal larceny as used in the surveys refers to having something stolen from oneself or another member of the household while staying in a temporary location such as a motel or a relative's house. Table 2 shows that, in the 1994 survey, 7.8 percent of the respondents reported being the victim of a personal

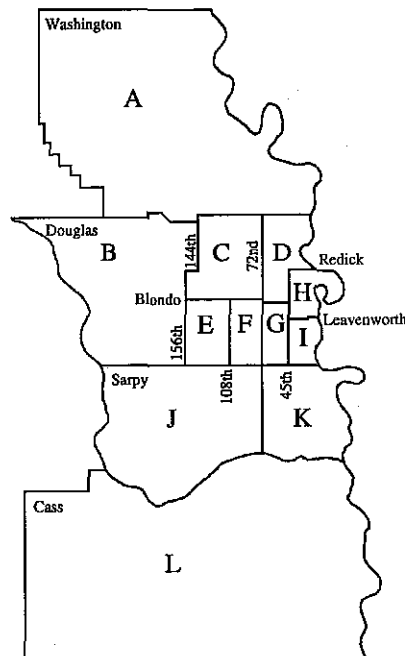
larceny which compares to 5.6 percent of the respondents in 1990. The biggest difference across population subgroups is for race. Nonwhites were almost twice as likely as Whites to report being a victim of a personal larceny during the last six months (14.1 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively).

Comparisons between geographic areas are not possible since personal larceny by definition does not take place at a person's residence.

Endnote

1. See Chris E. Marshall, Omaha Conditions Survey: 1990 "Crime in the Omaha Area: Perceptions, Protective Measures, and Victimization," Center for Public Affairs Research, The University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Map 1
Reference Map Showing Geographic Distribution of the Metro Sample



Area	Number of Respondents	Zip Code
A	24	68002, 68008, 68023, 68029, 68034, 68068
B	49	68007, 68022, 68064, 68069, 68116, 68118, 68130, 68135
C	90	68122, 68134, 68142, 68164
D	82	68104, 68112, 68152
E	126	68010, 68137, 68144, 68154
F	61	68114, 68124, 68127
G	71	68106, 68117, 68132
H	51	68102, 68110, 68111, 68131
I	70	68105, 68107, 68108
J	46	68028, 68046, 68059, 68128, 68136, 68138
K	99	68005, 68113, 68123, 68133, 68147, 68157
L	29	68037, 68048, 68304, 68307, 68347, 68349, 68366, 68407, 68409, 68413, 68455, 68463
-	2	Not reported

Omaha's Citizens Look at Their Police

by
**Vincent Webb, Chairperson, and
 Charles Katz, Graduate Assistant,
 Department of Criminal Justice**

Citizen perception of the Omaha Police Department and its officers was a detailed topic included in the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994. The survey asked questions related to citizen experiences with the police department, satisfaction with services, and assessment of officer demeanor and characteristics. Findings summarized here are based on those respondents in the survey sample who resided within the legal limits of the City of Omaha. The responses are examined and analyzed across population subgroups defined by race, age, sex, income and education levels. The number and percentage of respondents in each subgroup for the City of Omaha sub-sample are given in table 8.

Citizen Views of Omaha Police Department Performance

Table 1 shows that most respondents think that the Omaha Police Department is doing a good job of providing police services to the community (80.4 percent strongly agree or agree). Although the finding is not included in the table, a much larger percentage of white respondents than nonwhite respondents gave positive responses (84.1 percent and 54.1 respectively). The differences in responses across the other sub-population categories are too small to be considered statistically significant.

Nearly three-fourths (72.7 percent) of the respondents strongly agreed or

agreed with the statement "Employees of the Omaha Police Department relate well with the public they serve." Whites were more likely than Nonwhites to strongly agree or agree (76.2 percent versus 67.2 percent). Females and males, older and younger respondents, and respondents from different income and education levels were equally likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement.

Nearly three-fourths (74.2 percent) of those surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha Police Department listens and responds to the concerns and complaints of citizens. This pattern was fairly consistent across most demographic categories with the exception of race: only 50.0 percent of Nonwhites gave positive responses compared to 74.7 percent of Whites.

Key Findings

- About 80 percent of the respondents agreed that the Omaha Police Department is doing a good job.
- Nearly three out of four respondents agreed that Omaha Police Department employees relate well with the public.
- About 85 percent of those respondents who called for police reported that the officer who responded was professional.
- Just over two-thirds of the respondents who called for service were satisfied with the amount of time it took for the police to respond.
- About 86 percent of the respondents who had been stopped by an Omaha Police Department officer reported that the officer who made the stop was courteous.
- About four out of five respondents who called for police service reported that they had a good experience with the Omaha Police Department.
- Nearly three out of four respondents agreed that the Omaha Police Department listens and responds to concerns and complaints of citizens.

Respondents Who Called the Omaha Police Department

Just over half (50.3 percent) of the respondents in the sample reported that they had called the police during the past two years. Table 2 shows that 79.9 percent of these respondents said the officer who responded was always courteous or courteous most of the time. Just over 70 percent said that the officer was always helpful or helpful most of the time. Over 85 percent said the officer was professional always or most of the time.

Of the respondents who had called the police, Whites were more likely than Nonwhites to respond that the officer was courteous (83.7 percent versus 56.3 percent), professional (88.6 percent versus 65.6 percent) or helpful (73.3 percent versus 59.4 percent).

Table 1. Assessment of the Omaha Police Department, 1994

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Overall, the Omaha Police Department does a good job of providing police services to the community	25	5.2	363	75.2	52	10.8	38	7.9	5	1.0
Employees of the Omaha Police Department relate well with the public they serve	16	3.4	328	69.3	70	14.8	50	10.6	9	1.9
I feel the Omaha Police Department listens and responds to the concerns and complaints of citizens	20	4.2	333	70.0	67	14.1	49	10.3	7	1.5

Table 2. Assessment of Officer Demeanor by Respondents Who Called the Omaha Police Department in Past Two Years, 1994

	Always		Most of the Time		Some of the Time		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Officer was courteous	137	58.5	50	21.4	38	16.2	9	3.8
Officer was helpful	121	51.7	46	19.7	43	18.4	24	10.3
Officer was professional	156	66.7	44	18.8	26	11.1	8	3.4

Satisfaction with Response Time

Those respondents who called for police service during the past two years were also asked about their satisfaction with the amount of time it took for the police to respond. Table 3 shows that just over two-thirds (69.4 percent) of the respondents said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. The differences in responses across subgroups (race, gender, age, education, and income) are too small to be considered statistically significant.

Dissatisfied respondents gave reasons for their dissatisfaction. The most frequent response (73.3 percent) was that the police arrived too late to do any-

thing. Eight percent said that the police never did respond, 6.7 percent responded that nothing was resolved, and 5.3 percent said that the police response was unhelpful. A variety of other reasons were given by the other 6.6 percent of respondents who were dissatisfied with response time.

Respondents Stopped by the Police

Nearly 54 percent of the respondents said that they had been stopped by an Omaha Police Department officer at some time. Table 4 shows that 86.4 percent responded that the officer who stopped them was courteous and 91.1 percent responded that the officer was

professional. Respondents across all demographic categories responded positively, although there were some obvious differences. The largest difference was in the percentage of Whites and Nonwhites who responded that the officer was courteous (90 percent versus 69.2 percent, respectively)

Good and Bad Experiences with the Police

Respondents were asked to give their levels of agreement with two statements about their experiences with the Omaha Police Department. Table 5 shows that about 72 percent of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I have personally had a good experience with the Omaha Police Department." Eighty-two percent of the respondents who had called the police in the past two years reported a good experience. Of those respondents who had been stopped by the police, 73.8 percent said they had a good experience.

Just over one-fifth (22.4 percent) of the respondents in the Omaha sample strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I have personally had a bad experience with the Omaha Police

Table 3. Satisfaction with Police Response Time for Respondents Who Called for Police Service in Past Two Years, 1994

Degree of Satisfaction	N	%
Very satisfied	83	33.9
Somewhat satisfied	87	35.5
Somewhat unsatisfied	30	12.2
Unsatisfied	45	18.4

Table 4. Assessment of Officer Behavior by Respondents Who Have Been Stopped by an Omaha Police Department Officer, 1994

Statement	N	%
Officer was courteous	223	86.4
Officer was professional	235	91.1

Department." About one-third (32.9 percent) of those who had called the police reported a bad experience, and 30.3 percent of those stopped by the police reported a bad experience.

Attitudes Toward Police Officers

The survey included a variety of attitude statements about the demeanor and characteristics of Omaha Police Department officers. Table 6 gives the percentage of respondent agreement or disagreement with selected attitude statements. Generally, the responses to attitude statements about police officer

demeanor suggest that Omaha residents have a positive view of the officers: 89.0 percent strongly agreed or agreed that Omaha police officers are courteous; 86.6 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they are respectful; and 78.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that Omaha police officers show concern. Only 16.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha police use too much force, and just 7.7 percent strongly agreed or agreed that officers are usually rude.

The percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with attitude statements about officer demeanor varies across demographic categories, especially race. As table 7 shows, nonwhite

respondents were much less positive than white ones for each of the attitude statements about officer demeanor. Differences across the other subgroup categories are less pronounced, although female respondents were more positive than male respondents for some of the attitude statements as were older respondents and those from middle and upper income categories. Differences among respondents from different education levels are generally small, although respondents with some college were the most positive.

The responses to four statements about police officer characteristics are also summarized in table 6. Just under 70 percent strongly agreed or agreed that Omaha police officers are physically fit. Whites were more likely than Nonwhites to strongly agree or agree with this statement although the difference is not statistically significant. The differences across the other subgroups are generally small and nonsignificant. One exception is that older respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree that Omaha police officers are physically fit. Another exception is that respondents with some college were less likely than those with only a high school diploma or those without a high school

Table 5. Percentage Responding Strongly Agree or Agree with Statements About Experiences with the Omaha Police Department, 1994

Statement	City of Omaha Sample	Respondents Who Called Omaha Police Department in Past Two Years	Respondents Who Have Been Stopped by an Omaha Police Department Officer
I have personally had a good experience with the Omaha Police Department	71.6	82.0	73.8
I have personally had a bad experience with the Omaha Police Department	22.4	32.9	30.3

Table 6. Selected Attitude Statements about Omaha Police Department Officer Demeanor and Characteristics, 1994

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Officer Demeanor:										
Omaha police officers are usually courteous	92	19.1	337	69.9	27	5.6	20	4.1	6	1.2
Omaha police officers are respectful toward people like me	59	12.4	354	74.2	30	6.3	26	5.5	8	1.7
Police officers show concern when you ask them questions	24	5.1	344	73.0	51	10.8	49	10.4	3	0.6
Omaha police officers use more force than they need to in carrying out their duties	11	2.4	67	14.4	74	15.9	261	56.3	51	11.0
Most police officers are usually rude	5	1.0	32	6.7	32	6.7	335	70.1	74	15.5
Officer Characteristics:										
Omaha police officers are physically fit	29	6.1	297	62.9	74	15.7	55	11.7	17	3.6
Omaha police officers are prejudiced against minority persons	13	2.8	57	12.3	91	19.7	247	53.5	54	11.7
Omaha police officers are not able to answer citizens' questions correctly	2	0.4	65	14.0	88	19.0	279	60.1	30	6.5
Omaha police officers respond quickly to calls for service	21	4.5	261	56.3	65	14.0	95	20.5	22	4.7

Table 7. Percentage Responding Strongly Agree or Agree to Selected Attitude Statement about Omaha Police Officers by Selected Population Characteristics and Geographic Areas, 1994

	City of Omaha Sample	Race		Sex		Age			Income			
		White	Non-White	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	Under 20,000	20,000 39,999	Over 40,000	
Officer Demeanor:												
Omaha police officers are usually courteous	89.0	91.7	70.5*	85.0	92.5*	84.6	91.4	93.1	84.6	91.1	89.7	
Omaha police officers are respectful toward people like me	86.6	90.8	57.3*	81.3	91.3*	79.4	83.3	96.6*	75.8	87.8	90.8*	
Police officers show concern when you ask them questions	78.1	80.5	63.4*	75.1	80.9*	68.5	80.9	92.6*	74.1	78.6	77.5	
Omaha police officers use more force than they need to in carrying out their duties	16.8	11.7	50.8*	15.2	17.2	19.4	14.3	17.1	31.8	9.8	12.2*	
Most police officers are usually rude	7.7	5.9	20.0*	9.7	6.0	12.9	5.3	3.5	13.5	4.8	6.9	
Officer Characteristics:												
Omaha police officers are physically fit	69.1	70.4	60.0	66.8	71.1	62.8	68.0	84.5*	75.8	68.7	65.3	
Omaha police officers are prejudiced against minority persons	15.2	9.7	41.7*	17.3	13.3	16.0	16.2	10.2	22.7	12.9	13.8	
Omaha police officers are not able to answer citizens' questions correctly	14.4	10.6	39.6*	16.9	12.3	16.2	11.2	18.3	31.0	11.0	9.9*	
Omaha police officers respond quickly to calls for service	60.8	64.4	37.3*	60.4	61.1	55.6	63.8	63.8	57.3	63.1	61.2	
		Education			Geographic Areas							
		No High School Diploma	High School Diploma Only	Some College	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Officer Demeanor:												
Omaha police officers are usually courteous	87.2		88.5	89.4	100.0	85.5	90.7	93.7	98.0	86.9	74.5	89.7
Omaha police officers are respectful toward people like me	82.0		85.7	87.4	100.0	88.5	89.4	81.5	96.1	87.2	67.4	78.8*
Police officers show concern when you ask them questions	83.8		76.2	78.1	87.5	82.7	80.0	84.0	88.0	69.5	65.3	72.7
Omaha police officers use more force than they need to in carrying out their duties	22.2		20.9	14.2	0.0	11.3	17.6	6.8	12.5	15.7	34.0	27.7*
Most police officers are usually rude	15.4		8.6	6.4	0.0	3.4	8.1	2.1	3.9	10.0	24.0	8.8*
Officer Characteristics:												
Omaha police officers are physically fit	73.7		66.2	70.1	85.7	65.6	60.8	72.1	72.0	75.7	69.4	66.7
Omaha police officers are prejudiced against minority persons	13.5		17.6	14.4	14.3	10.0	13.7	4.4	10.6	14.7	36.0	13.8*
Omaha police officers are not able to answer citizens' questions correctly	22.2		21.0	10.9*	0.0	10.9	20.6	6.5	10.0	11.8	31.3	17.9
Omaha police officers respond quickly to calls for service	45.9		53.6	66.0	75.0	56.8	54.7	75.5	72.4	59.7	51.0	48.5*

*Differences across categories are statistically significant at the p = 0.05 level of significance.

diploma to agree that police officers are physically fit.

About 15 percent (15.2 percent) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Omaha Police officers are prejudiced against minority persons." Nonwhites (41.7 percent) were over four times as likely than Whites (9.7 percent) to strongly agree or agree with the statement.

Just under 15 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that police officers are not able to answer citizens' questions correctly. Although there is some variation in responses across different demographic categories, the most obvious is for the race category. Nonwhites (39.6 percent) were nearly four times more likely than Whites (10.6 percent) to strongly agree or agree that officers are not able to answer citizens' questions correctly. About three out of five respondents (60.8 percent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Omaha Police officers respond quickly to calls for service." Whites (64.4 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that officers respond quickly more frequently than Nonwhites (37.3 percent).

Conclusions

Findings from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 show that in general, Omaha's citizens are positive about their experiences with the Omaha Police Department. Their assessment of police officer demeanor and characteristics tends to be quite positive. However, when the assessments of white and non-white citizens are compared, the differences are substantial: Nonwhites are much less positive than Whites. These

findings tend to replicate those from research and public opinion polls conducted in other American cities. The general pattern is one where the public has positive attitudes toward the police with Whites being much more positive than Nonwhites. These findings point to the need for continued emphasis on improving relationships between the Omaha Police Department and all segments of the community.

Map 1
Reference Map Showing Geographic Distribution of the Metro Sample

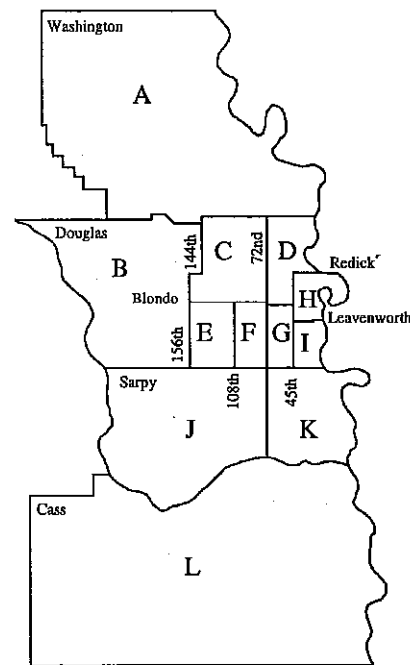


Table 8. Respondent Characteristics for City of Omaha Sub-Sample, 1994

	Number (N = 494)	Percentage
Age:		
18-34	186	38.0
35-64	213	43.6
65+	90	18.4
Race:		
White	431	87.4
Non-White	62	12.6
Income:		
Less than \$19,999	95	21.4
\$20,000 to \$39,999	170	38.4
\$40,000 and over	178	40.2
Sex:		
Male	232	47.0
Female	262	53.0
Education:		
Less than high school diploma	40	8.1
High school diploma only	134	27.2
At least some college	318	64.6

Area	Number of Respondents	Zip Code
A	24	68002, 68008, 68023, 68029, 68034, 68068
B	49	68007, 68022, 68064, 68069, 68116, 68118, 68130, 68135
C	90	68122, 68134, 68142, 68164
D	82	68104, 68112, 68152
E	126	68010, 68137, 68144, 68154
F	61	68114, 68124, 68127
G	71	68106, 68117, 68132
H	51	68102, 68110, 68111, 68131
I	70	68105, 68107, 68108
J	46	68028, 68046, 68059, 68128, 68136, 68138
K	99	68005, 68113, 68123, 68133, 68147, 68157
L	29	68037, 68048, 68304, 68307, 68347, 68349, 68366, 68407, 68409, 68413, 68455, 68463
-	2	Not reported

Omahans' Views on Community Policing and the Importance of Different Policing Activities

by
Vincent Webb, Chairperson,
Partick Gartin, Assistant Professor, and
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Department of Criminal Justice

Community policing has received a lot of attention across the country. In late 1993 and throughout 1994 the Omaha Police Department explored the possibility of implementing community policing strategies. Although there are different approaches, successful implementation always requires citizen awareness, understanding, and support of the concept and a willingness to be involved in crime prevention and crime reduction activities. Community policing frequently requires the police to add new activities and to readjust their priori-

ties away from other activities. The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 asked respondents about their awareness and understanding of community policing. Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of several different policing activities. This report summarizes the results from the 494 Omaha residents who participated in the survey.

Awareness and Understanding of Community Policing

Table 1 shows that approximately two-thirds (63.7 percent) of the respondents said they have heard of community policing. About half (49.0 percent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I have a good understanding of community policing." Awareness of the concept of community policing varied across several demographic categories. Whites were more likely than Nonwhites (64.7 percent versus 56.5 percent) to report having heard of community policing. Men were more likely than women (74.1 percent versus 54.2 percent) to report having heard of community policing. The percentage of respondents who reported that they have heard of community policing increases with income and education but decreases with age.

Nonwhites were more likely than Whites (61.3 percent versus 47.3 percent) to agree that they have a good understanding of community policing. Men were more likely than women (58.6 percent versus 40.4 percent) to report having a good understanding of community policing as were respondents without a high school diploma.

There is little variation in responses across different age and income categories.

Helping to Make Omaha Safer

Respondents were asked if they feel they can personally make a difference in helping to make Omaha a safer place to live. About four out of five (80.8 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that they can. Men tended to agree more frequently, as did respondents under age 65 and those with annual incomes of \$40,000 and over. Respondents without a high school diploma and those with some college tended to agree more frequently than those with a high school diploma only.

Rating of Different Policing Activities

Table 2 shows the average rating given by the respondents of different police activities. For discussion purposes the activities are grouped into three categories: traditional policing, community policing, and crime specific policing. It should be noted that although the Omaha Police Department currently engages in many of the activities that were rated by the respondents, some of the policing activities are hypothetical. Several of the hypothetical activities are those commonly associated with community policing. Activities categorized as crime specific policing refer to those activities involving strategies that are aggressive and targeted toward a specific crime. The respondents were asked to rate each

Key Findings

- About two-thirds (63.7 percent) of the respondents have heard of community policing.
- Less than half (49.0 percent) of the respondents said they have a good understanding of community policing.
- Four out of five respondents agreed that they can help to make Omaha a safer place.
- Respondents generally rated traditional policing activities and crime specific policing activities as more important than community policing activities.

Table 1. Percentage Responding Strongly Agree or Agree to Selected Attitude Statements Related to Community Policing, 1994

	Omaha Sample	Race		Sex		Age			Income		
		White	Nonwhite	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	Under \$20,000	\$20,000 \$39,999	\$40,000 and Over
I have heard of Community Policing	63.7	64.7	56.5	74.1	54.2*	65.0	64.8	57.8	52.6	66.4	69.7
I have a good understanding of Community Policing	49.0	47.3	61.3	58.6	40.4*	49.4	48.4	48.8	46.3	50.0	51.7
I feel that I personally can make a difference in helping to make Omaha a safer place to live	80.8	81.2	79.0	84.9	77.1*	82.3	84.5	70.0*	75.8	81.2	86.0
	Education			Geographic Area							
	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma Only	Some College	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
I have heard of Community Policing	52.5	52.2	69.8*	62.5	65.6	69.7	61.6	68.5	66.2	60.8	61.4
I have a good understanding of Community Policing	58.0	41.8	50.9	37.5	57.8	57.9	40.4	43.4	43.6	43.2	58.6
I feel that I personally can make a difference in helping to make Omaha a safer place to live	80.0	75.3	83.0	87.5	82.8	86.8	78.8	77.4	80.3	72.5	82.8

*Differences in means across subpopulations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Table 2. Average Ratings of Importance of Traditional Policing, Community Policing, and Crime Specific Policing Activities, 1994⁺

Traditional Activities		Community Policing Activities		Crime Specific Activities	
	Average Rating		Average Rating		Average Rating
Investigate street crime such as burglary and robbery	4.74	Meet with Neighborhood Watch groups on a regular basis	3.96	Investigate gang related activities	4.71
Investigate drug violations	4.55	Assist in after-school youth programs	3.90	Perform regular sweeps in high drug use areas	4.52
Respond to public disturbances	4.31	Give public presentations on drugs and crime	3.86	Set up road blocks for speeders and drunk drivers	3.98
Respond to family disputes	4.18	Provide bike patrols where requested	3.72		
Investigate white collar crime	4.13	Remove abandoned cars from neighborhoods	3.07		
Patrol residential neighborhoods	4.11	Meet business owners on a regular basis	3.03		
Enforce traffic laws	3.96	Remove graffiti from public areas	2.91		
Enforce vice laws—such as prostitution and gambling	3.75				

⁺Respondents were asked to rate each policing activity on a five point scale with 1 being unimportant and 5 being important.

activity using a five point rating system where 1 represents a rating of unimportant and 5 represents a rating of important.

Respondents rated the importance of traditional policing activities quite high. Investigating street crime received the highest average rating (4.74 out of a possible 5.0) and enforcing vice laws such as prostitution and gambling received the lowest average rating (3.75) for this category of activities.

In comparison to the ratings of importance given to traditional policing activities, respondents gave somewhat lower ratings to most community policing activities. Nevertheless, some community policing activities such as meeting with neighborhood watch groups (3.96) and assisting in after-school youth programs (3.90) were still rated quite important. Three of the community policing activities (remove abandoned cars from neighborhoods, meet business owners

on a regular basis, and remove graffiti from public areas) were given the lowest ratings of importance (3.07, 3.03, and 2.91, respectively) of all the activities.

Crime specific policing activities were rated quite important. Investigating gang related activities received the highest average rating (4.71) for this category followed by conducting drug sweeps (4.52) and setting up road blocks for speeders and drunk drivers (3.98).

Tables 3 through 5 provide a comparison of the average ratings of importance of different policing activities across several subpopulations (race, sex, age, income, education, and geographic area). The general pattern is that there are only small differences in the ratings of importance of policing activities among the respondents from different subpopulations. There are no significant differences between the ratings of

Whites and Nonwhites for any of the policing activities. Female respondents gave significantly higher ratings than males to all of the traditional and crime specific policing activities and to two of the community policing activities (give public presentations on drugs and crime and remove abandoned cars from neighborhoods).

Older respondents, in comparison to those in the other age categories, gave higher ratings to half of the traditional policing activities (respond to public disturbances, investigate white collar crime, enforce traffic laws and enforce vice laws) as well as to all of the community policing activities and to two of the crime specific policing activities (conduct drug sweeps and set up road blocks).

The differences in ratings of traditional policing activities by respondents from different income categories are non-significant except among the

Table 3. Average Ratings of Importance of Traditional Policing Activities by Population Characteristics, 1994*

Activity	Omaha Sample	Race		Sex		Age			Income		
		White	Nonwhite	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	Under \$20,000	\$20,000 \$39,999	\$40,000 and Over
Investigate street crime											
such as burglary and robbery	4.74	4.75	4.65	4.66	4.81*	4.68	4.78	4.76	4.72	4.70	4.75
Investigate drug violations	4.55	4.56	4.50	4.45	4.64*	4.50	4.51	4.73	4.52	4.53	4.58
Respond to public disturbances	4.31	4.31	4.27	4.20	4.40*	4.20	4.41	4.26*	4.30	4.26	4.34
Respond to family disputes	4.18	4.19	4.18	4.03	4.31*	4.19	4.22	4.02	4.08	4.15	4.24
Investigate white collar crime	4.13	4.10	4.28	4.01	4.23*	4.04	4.06	4.44*	4.28	4.07	4.05
Patrol residential neighborhoods	4.11	4.11	4.13	3.96	4.24*	4.10	4.14	4.10	4.29	4.14	4.03
Enforce traffic laws	3.96	3.94	4.08	3.82	4.08*	3.07	3.98	4.44*	4.07	3.92	3.87
Enforce vice laws—such as prostitution and gambling	3.75	3.75	3.70	3.49	3.98*	3.63	3.68	4.17*	4.04	3.73	3.59*
<hr/>											
Activity	Education			Geographic Area							
	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma Only	Some College	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Investigate street crime such as burglary and robbery	4.79	4.76	4.73	5.00	4.85	4.73	4.75	4.80	4.58	4.64	4.80
Investigate drug violations	4.28	4.61	4.56	5.00	4.72	4.50	4.56	4.50	4.34	4.54	4.66
Respond to public disturbances	4.07	4.30	4.34	4.50	4.39	4.25	4.25	4.26	4.34	4.24	4.42
Respond to family disputes	3.94	4.24	4.19	4.50	4.33	4.12	4.14	4.19	4.15	3.96	4.34
Investigate white collar crime	4.05	4.25	4.09	5.00	4.39	4.10	3.96	4.18	4.02	4.14	4.12
Patrol residential neighborhoods	4.23	4.19	4.06	3.87	4.19	4.22	3.98	4.00	4.00	4.16	4.32
Enforce traffic laws	4.07	4.18	3.86*	3.87	3.95	3.94	3.89	4.22	3.68	4.05	4.13
Enforce vice laws—such as prostitution and gambling	3.78	3.88	3.69	4.00	3.92	3.70	3.45	3.82	3.64	3.95	3.97

*Respondents were asked to rate each policing activity on a five point scale with 1 being unimportant and 5 being important.

*Differences in means across subpopulations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Table 4. Average Ratings of Importance of Community Policing Activities by Population Characteristics, 1994[†]

Activity	Omaha Sample	Race		Sex		Age			Income		
		White	Nonwhite	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	Under \$20,000	\$20,000 \$39,999	\$40,000 and Over
Meet with Neighborhood Watch groups on a regular basis	3.96	3.94	4.03	3.90	4.01	3.74	3.92	4.53*	4.36	4.00	3.79*
Assist in after-school youth programs	3.90	3.86	4.11	3.79	3.99	3.79	3.80	4.38*	4.18	3.88	3.71*
Give public presentations on drugs and crime	3.86	3.84	4.03	3.74	3.97*	3.82	3.73	4.25*	4.09	3.88	3.69*
Provide bike patrols where requested	3.72	3.71	3.83	3.65	3.78	3.64	3.64	4.08*	4.04	3.75	3.51*
Remove abandoned cars from neighborhoods	3.07	3.03	3.22	2.93	3.19*	2.87	2.92	3.80*	3.45	3.05	2.84*
Meet business owners on a regular basis	3.03	3.02	3.12	3.00	3.06	2.79	2.95	3.71*	3.44	3.01	2.82*
Remove graffiti from public areas	2.91	2.86	3.22	2.80	3.00	2.90	2.64	3.55*	3.49	2.99	2.50*

Activity	Education			Geographic Area							
	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma Only	Some College	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Meet with Neighborhood Watch groups on a regular basis	4.30	4.14	3.84*	3.50	3.92	3.98	3.84	3.77	3.95	4.17	4.20
Assist in after-school youth programs	4.12	4.24	3.73*	3.62	4.14	3.81	3.73	3.69	3.78	4.15	4.15
Give public presentations on drugs and crime	4.20	4.09	3.72*	3.75	4.03	3.84	3.70	3.77	3.78	3.78	4.20
Provide bike patrols where requested	3.90	3.92	3.62	3.50	3.95	3.84	3.28	3.50	3.70	3.88	4.11*
Remove abandoned cars from neighborhoods	3.50	3.45	2.85*	3.00	3.15	3.13	2.78	3.09	3.02	3.41	3.12
Meet business owners on a regular basis	3.03	3.02	3.12	3.00	3.06	2.79	2.95	3.71*	3.44	3.01	2.82*
Remove graffiti from public areas	3.05	3.38	2.69*	2.12	2.96	2.93	2.64	2.66	2.87	2.94	3.51*

[†]Respondents were asked to rate each policing activity on a five point scale with 1 being unimportant and 5 being important.

*Differences in means across subpopulations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

ratings for enforcing vice laws. The higher the income of the respondent the less important the activity was rated. Respondents with incomes of \$40,000 and over gave lower average ratings to every community policing activity than did respondents with lower incomes. The most pronounced difference in ratings is between those respondents in the under \$20,000 income category and those in the \$40,000 and over category. Respondents from the latter category also gave significantly lower ratings to two of the crime specific policing activities (conduct drug sweeps and set up road blocks).

The pattern of differences in ratings given by respondents from different education levels is similar to the one for income: there is little relationship between education and the rating of traditional and crime specific policing activities. Respondents with at least some college generally tended to give lower ratings to the importance of community policing activities.

Conclusion

Findings from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 indicate that the stage for

implementing community policing-type strategies in Omaha is only partially set. Citizens said they are aware of the concept and believe they can help make the community safer. At the same time, fewer than half indicated they have a good understanding of community policing and community policing activities tended to be rated as less important than traditional or crime specific policing activities. Successful implementation of community policing or community policing-type strategies will require expanded understanding of the concept and support for community policing activities throughout the community.

Table 5. Average Ratings of Importance of Crime Specific Activities by Population Characteristics, 1994⁺

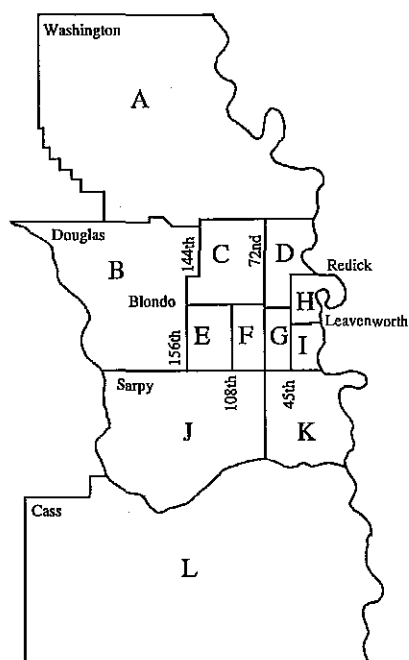
Activity	Omaha Sample	Race		Sex		Age			Income		
		White	Nonwhite	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-\$39,999	\$40,000 and Over
Investigate gang related activities	4.71	4.71	4.67	4.58	4.82*	4.72	4.70	4.68	4.71	4.73	4.69
Perform regular sweeps in high drug use areas	4.52	4.51	4.53	4.37	4.65*	4.43	4.48	4.80*	4.86	4.41	4.42*
Set up road blocks for speeders and drunk drivers	3.98	3.96	4.08	3.72	4.21*	3.85	3.88	4.47*	4.36	3.90	3.84*

Activity	Education			Geographic Area							
	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma Only	Some College	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Investigate gang related activities	4.53	4.75	4.70	5.00	4.80	4.66	4.73	4.62	4.62	4.66	4.77
Perform regular sweeps in high drug use areas	4.67	4.65	4.45	4.62	4.71	4.47	4.28	4.49	4.25	4.78	4.87*
Set up road blocks for speeders and drunk drivers	4.22	4.16	3.88	4.12	4.07	3.89	3.79	3.92	3.78	4.21	4.32

+Respondents were asked to rate each policing activity on a five point scale with 1 being unimportant and 5 being important.

*Differences in means across subpopulations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Map 1
Reference Map Showing Geographic Distribution of the Metro Sample



Area	Number of Respondents	Zip Code
A	24	68002, 68008, 68023, 68029, 68034, 68068
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C	90	68122, 68134, 68142, 68164
D	82	68104, 68112, 68152
E	126	68010, 68137, 68144, 68154
F	61	68114, 68124, 68127
G	71	68106, 68117, 68132
H	51	68102, 68110, 68111, 68131
I	70	68105, 68107, 68108
J	46	68028, 68046, 68059, 68128, 68136, 68138
K	99	68005, 68113, 68123, 68133, 68147, 68157
L	29	68037, 68048, 68304, 68307, 68347, 68349, 68366, 68407, 68409, 68413, 68455, 68463
-	2	Not reported

Omaha Area Citizens Evaluate Library Services

by

E. David Fifer, Research Associate
Center for Public Affairs Research

One objective of the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 was to collect citizen input on library services in the Omaha area. This section presents information on adult library users in the Omaha area and reasons why some adults do not use the library. Also discussed are patterns of use for library services and facilities and a citizen evaluation of services and facilities. The section concludes with opinions on future directions for library services.

Omaha Public Library Users

Number of Users. Respondents were asked if they had used any branch of the Omaha Public Library in the last three years. More than one half (55.4 percent) reported that they had. Assuming that roughly 417,000 adults total reside in the four-county area, this works out to about 231,000 area adult users of the Omaha Public Library.

User Characteristics. The percentage of adults using the Omaha Public Library in the last three years varied by age, education, and household income as well as by geographic sub-area. There was no significant difference in library usage among area adults by either race or sex.

By age, persons under age 50 were more likely to have used the library than were persons aged 50 and over. By education, rates of library usage increased as educational attainment increased. Likewise, rates of library usage increased as household income increased. Table 1 shows the percentage of adults using the library tabulated by age, education, and household income.

Key Findings

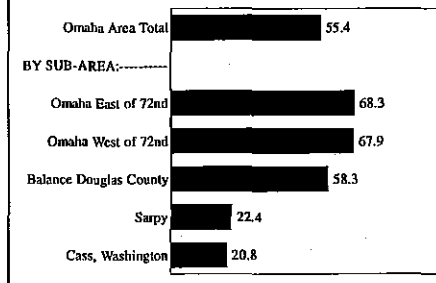
- More than half of the adults (55.4 percent) in the four-county area have used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years. More than two-thirds of the adults in the City of Omaha (68.1 percent) have used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years.
- More than one out of four Omaha area adult users of the Omaha Public Library (27.9 percent) use primarily the main (W. Dale Clark) library. The remaining 72.1 percent use primarily one of the nine branch libraries.
- Omaha area adults use the three Omaha Public Library branches west of 72nd Street more heavily than they use the six branches east of 72nd Street.
- Nearly all Omaha area adult users of the Omaha Public Library say the staff are helpful and the facilities are well maintained and well furnished. About eight out of ten (83.3 percent) say the hours are adequate, 75.9 percent say there are enough books and other resources, and 70.9 percent say the parking is adequate.
- About half (49.8 percent) of the adults in the four-county area say they would be willing to pay higher taxes to support improved services in the Omaha Public Libraries.
- About six out of ten adults (59.3 percent) in the four-county area say they would support a bond issue to improve existing library facilities. More than half (54.0 percent) say they would support a bond issue to add new library facilities in suburban areas.
- Nearly two out of three adults (65.5 percent) in the four-county area say efforts should be pursued to establish one common library system for the Omaha metropolitan area.

Table 1. Omaha Area Adults Who Have Used the Omaha Public Library in the Last 3 Years

Respondent Characteristics	Percent of Respondents	
	Used Library	Did Not Use Library
Total (N=798)	55.4	44.6
Age (N=791):		
18-24	61.8	38.2
25-34	55.9	44.1
35-49	60.3	39.7
50-64	49.6	50.4
65 and over	44.2	55.8
Education (N=795):		
Less than high school	38.2	61.8
High school diploma only	43.5	56.5
Some college only	57.1	42.9
College graduate	67.6	32.4
Household Income (N=716):		
Under \$20,000	46.0	54.0
\$20,000-29,999	51.6	48.4
\$30,000-49,999	61.0	39.0
\$50,000 and over	61.3	38.7

Users by Place of Residence. Looking at geographic sub-areas, about two-thirds of adults residing in the City of Omaha (68.1 percent) had used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years. Throughout the rest of Douglas County, 58.3 percent were library users. Among adults in Sarpy, Cass, and Washington counties combined, 21.9 percent were Omaha Public Library users. Chart 1 shows the percentage of adults using the library for five separate geographic sub-areas.

Chart 1. Percentage of Area Adults Using Omaha Public Library in Last 3 Years, Total and by Place of Residence



Reasons for Not Using the Omaha Public Library

The 44.6 percent of respondents who said they had not used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years were asked why they had not used it. The reasons most often mentioned were: no need or time to use the library (45.8 percent); live outside the service area (17.4 percent); and use UNO/Offutt Air Force Base/another city library (16.3 percent). Table 2 summarizes reasons mentioned for not using the Omaha Public Library in the last three years.

Omaha Public Library Services and Facilities Used

Respondents who said they had used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years were asked if, in the last year, they had used the library to:

- borrow or check out materials,
- read or use materials in the library,

Table 2. Reasons for Not Using the Omaha Public Library Mentioned by Omaha Area Adults Not Using the Library in the Last 3 Years

Rank		Percent*
1	No need or time to use library	45.8
2	Live outside library service area	17.4
3	Use library other than Omaha Public Library	16.3
4	Library too far away	9.3
5	Physical limitation prevents using library	5.3
6	New to the area	4.8
7	Library doesn't have/can't find what I want	1.1
8	Library not open when I want to use it	0.6
	Other	3.9
	Valid cases	356

*Sum of percentages exceeds 100 percent because respondents could give more than one reason.

- request information over the telephone,
- access the library catalog via computer,
- attend programs for children,
- attend meetings, and
- do something else.

The library services most often used were: reading or using materials in the library (82.2 percent); borrowing or checking out materials (73.5 percent); and accessing the library catalog via computer (43.4 percent). Table 3 summarizes library services used in the last year.

Respondents who said they had used the Omaha Public Library in the last three years were also asked which library facility they used the most. The most-used facility was the main library (W. Dale Clark). More than one out of four respondents (27.9 percent) said they most used the main library, and the remaining 72.1 percent used the nine branch libraries. The most-used branch library was Swanson located at 90th and Dodge, followed by the other two branches west of 72nd Street (Millard and Abrahams). As many respondents reported using the Swanson branch as reported using all six branches combined east of 72nd Street.

Survey results also provide some information on library usage patterns by place of residence. Omaha Public Library users residing in Sarpy, Cass,

Table 3. Omaha Public Library Services Used in the Last Year by Omaha Area Adult Library Users

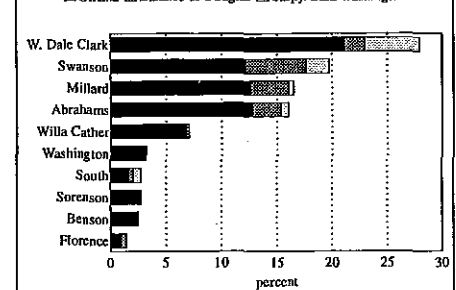
Rank		Percent*
1	Read or use materials in the library	82.2
2	Borrow or check out materials	73.5
3	Access the library catalog via computer	43.4
4	Request information over the telephone	33.9
5	Attend programs for children	10.9
6	Attend meetings	8.6
	Other	1.8
	Valid cases	444

*Sum of percentages exceeds 100 percent because respondents could give more than one use.

and Washington counties are most likely to use the main library (W. Dale Clark) as well as the Swanson, Abrahams, and South branches. Users residing in Douglas County, but outside Omaha, are most likely to use the Swanson, Millard, and Abrahams branches as well as the main library.

Chart 2 shows the percentage of Omaha area adult library users by branch used most and place of residence. The total length of a bar represents the percentage of adult library users in the four-county area who mostly use that facility. The shading within bars represents the proportion of users who live within the City of Omaha; elsewhere in Douglas County; and in Sarpy, Cass, or Washington counties.

Chart 2. Percentage of Area Adult Users of the Omaha Public Library by Branch Most Used and Place of Residence



Evaluation of Omaha Public Library Services and Facilities

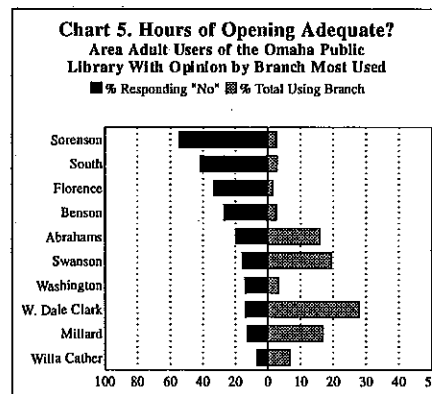
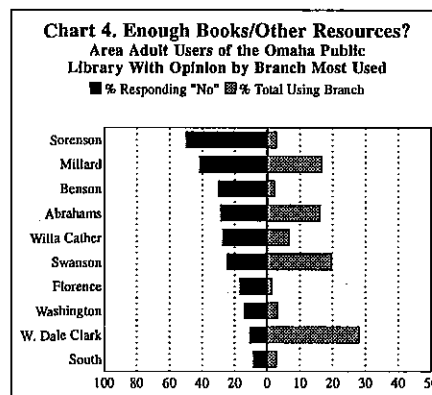
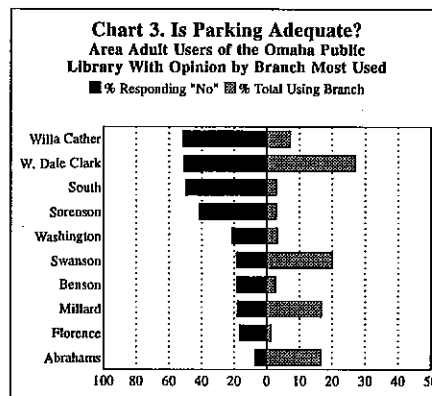
Respondents who had used the library in the last three years were asked to think of the branch they used most and answer the following questions:

- Are there enough books and other resources?
- Are the books and other resources up to date?
- Are the hours of opening adequate?
- Are the staff helpful?
- Is the parking there adequate?
- Is the building well maintained?
- Is the building well furnished?

Respondents tended not to express opinions on these questions when they had no basis for judgement. For example, persons whose only use of the library was to request information over the telephone said "don't know" when asked if parking was adequate. The results presented in this section are based only on those respondents who expressed informed opinions either "yes" or "no" to the questions above.

Looking at the Omaha Public Library system as a whole, nearly all users said that at the branch they used most, the staff were helpful (97.7 percent), the building was well maintained (97.3 percent), and the building was well furnished (96.8 percent). About nine out of ten (91.9 percent) said that the books and other resources were up to date. About eight out of ten (83.3 percent) said the hours were adequate. Three-fourths (75.9 percent) said there were enough books and other resources, and 70.9 percent said that parking was adequate.

Charts 3, 4, and 5 focus on the three items with the highest levels of dissatisfaction (parking, enough books/resources, and hours of opening) by branch. The bars on the left-hand side of each chart show the percentage of each branch's users responding "no" to the question. The bars on the right-hand side show the percentage of Omaha Public Library system patrons who use each branch. Looking at chart 3 (parking), for example, the left side indicates that about half the users of the Willa Cather, W. Dale Clark, and South



library facilities said "no" to the question, "Is the parking there adequate?" The right side reminds the reader that the W. Dale Clark Library serves over one-fourth of all Omaha Public Library system patrons while the South Branch serves under five percent of system patrons. Chart 4 shows that Sorenson and Millard branch library users were most likely to say their library does have enough books and other resources. Of the two, the Millard branch is used more heavily. Chart 5 shows that Sorenson and South branch library users were most likely to say their library keeps inadequate hours. Both of these branches serve a relatively small proportion of the library system's patrons. In fact, the four branches whose users were most likely to say their library kept inadequate hours (Sorenson, South, Florence, and Benson) are also the four branches reporting the fewest number of Omaha Public Library system patrons.

Future Directions for Library Services

All respondents were asked four questions regarding future directions for library services. The first three dealt with willingness to provide financial support to improve library services, enlarge and refurbish existing libraries, and add new libraries in suburban areas. The fourth question dealt with whether or not to pursue the establishment of a single common library system for the Omaha metropolitan area.

Table 4 summarizes the results from all respondents in the four-county area. The reader should note that results represent all respondents in the four-county

Table 4. Responses of Omaha Area Adults to Questions Regarding Future Directions for Library Services

Question	Percent		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to support improved library services in the Omaha Public Libraries?	49.8	41.6	8.6
Would you support a bond issue to enlarge and refurbish existing library facilities?	59.3	29.8	11.0
Would you support a bond issue to add new library facilities in the suburban areas around Omaha?	54.0	37.0	9.0
Should efforts be pursued to establish one common library system for the Omaha metropolitan area?	65.5	20.6	13.9

area, not just voters. The opinions of voters only might differ significantly from the opinions presented here. For all four questions, the difference in the proportion of persons responding "yes" and "no" was statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Tax Increase to Improve Services.

Just about half the respondents (49.8 percent) said "yes" to the question, "Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to support improved library services in the Omaha Public Libraries?" (no, 41.6 percent; and don't know, 8.6 percent).

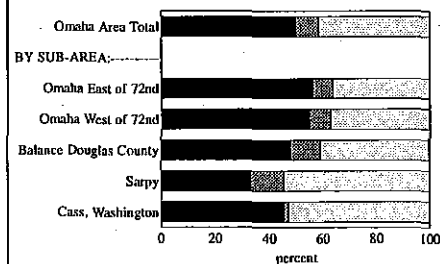
Willingness to pay higher taxes to support improved library services varied by education and geographic sub-area. There was no significant difference by age, race, sex, or household income.

Willingness to pay higher taxes for improving library services increased as education increased. Among persons with less than a high school education, 39.3 said they were willing to pay higher taxes to improve library services. Among those with a college degree, 54.7 percent said they were willing to do so.

Not surprisingly, City of Omaha residents indicated the greatest willingness to pay higher taxes to improve Omaha Public Library services. Least willing to do so were Sarpy County residents, many of whom are currently served by other municipal libraries or by the Offutt Air Force Base library. Chart 6 presents results for the Omaha area and for five geographic sub-areas.

Chart 6. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to support improved library services in the Omaha Public Libraries?

■ Yes ■ Don't know □ No



Bond Issue to Improve Existing Facilities.

About six out of ten respondents (59.3 percent) said "yes" to the question, "Would you support a bond issue to enlarge and refurbish existing

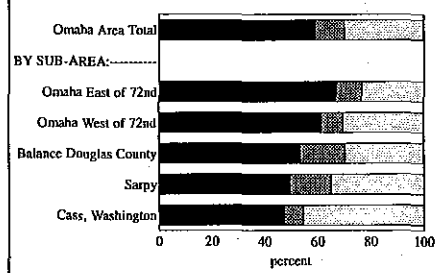
library facilities?" (no, 29.8 percent; and don't know, 11.0 percent).

Support for a bond issue to improve existing library facilities did not vary significantly by age, race, sex, education, or household income.

As one might expect, citizen support for a bond issue to enlarge and refurbish existing libraries appears greater the closer one gets to downtown Omaha. Chart 7 presents results for the Omaha area and for five geographic sub-areas.

Chart 7. Would you support a bond issue to enlarge and refurbish existing library facilities?

■ Yes ■ Don't know □ No



Bond Issue to Add New Suburban Facilities.

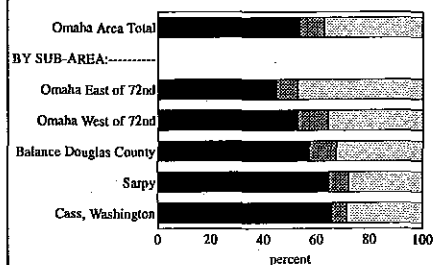
Over half (54.0 percent) said "yes" to the question, "Would you support a bond issue to add new library facilities in the suburban areas around Omaha?" (no, 37.0 percent; and don't know, 9.0 percent).

Support for a bond issue to add suburban library facilities did not vary significantly by age, race, sex, education, or household income.

Citizen support for a bond issue to add suburban library facilities seems to grow the farther one gets from downtown Omaha. Chart 8 presents results

Chart 8. Would you support a bond issue to add new library facilities in the suburban areas around Omaha?

■ Yes ■ Don't know □ No



for the Omaha area and for five geographic sub-areas.

Efforts to Establish One Common Omaha Metropolitan Library System.

Nearly two-thirds (65.5 percent) said "yes" to the question, "Should efforts be pursued to establish one common library system for the Omaha metropolitan area?" (no, 20.6 percent; and don't know, 13.9 percent).

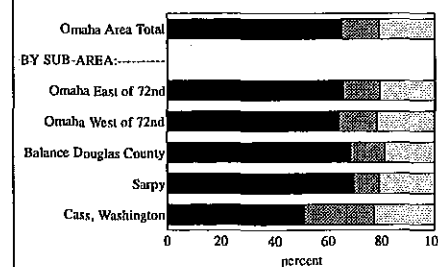
Opinions on whether to pursue establishment of an Omaha metropolitan library system varied by age, sex, and education; there were no significant differences by race or household income.

Overall, younger persons were more likely to favor pursuing a common library system than were older persons. Among respondents aged 18 to 24, 73.8 percent favored a common metropolitan library system compared to 52.5 percent of those aged 65 and older. Men were slightly more likely than women to favor a common library system. People with higher levels of education were more likely to favor a common library system than were people with lower levels of education.

By sub-area, support for pursuing establishment of one common Omaha metropolitan library system appears fairly uniform except among residents of Cass and Washington counties. In those counties, a smaller proportion expressed support, and a larger proportion was undecided. In all five geographic sub-areas, about one in five expressed opposition to the idea. Chart 9 presents results for the Omaha area and for five geographic sub-areas.

Chart 9. Should efforts be pursued to establish one common library system for the Omaha metropolitan area?

■ Yes ■ Don't know □ No



Home Computers and the Information Superhighway

by

E. David Fifer, Research Associate, and
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The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 sought to develop information on Omaha area residents' understanding of the information superhighway and their readiness to use this new technology.

Survey respondents were asked if they have a personal computer, modem, and/or fax machine in their home. Respondents were also asked if they have seen, read, or heard anything about the information superhighway and, if so, how well they understand what it is. A final question asked respondents how likely they would be to use a computer at the library to access the information superhighway if such a service were available.

Personal Computers and Modems at Home

About two out of five respondents (41.2 percent) said they have a personal computer at home, and of those with home computers, just under two-thirds (63.5 percent) have a modem. (Modems are devices which enable computers to exchange information over telephone lines.) Overall, then, about one in four respondents (26.2 percent) said they have a personal computer with a modem at home. Another 15.0 percent of respondents said they have a personal computer without a modem at home, and 58.8 percent said they do not have a per-

sonal computer at home. The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 did not attempt to gather any details about the capabilities of respondents' personal home computers other than whether or not they have modems.

Presence of home personal computers among respondents varied by age, race,¹ sex, education, household income, and presence of school-aged children. Home personal computers were most prevalent among respondents aged 35 to 49. More than half (54.0 percent) of the respondents in this age group reported having a personal computer at home. Home computers were least prevalent among respondents aged 65 and over. Only 13.3 percent of the respondents in this age group said they have a personal computer at home. Whites were more likely than Blacks to have a personal computer at home, and men were more likely than women. College graduates were about twice as likely to have a personal computer at home as persons with no more than a high school education.

Not unexpectedly, respondents with higher household incomes were more likely to have a personal computer at home than respondents with lower household incomes. Computers in high-income households were also more likely to be equipped with modems. Among respondents with annual household incomes of \$50,000 or more, 45.0 percent had computers with modems at home, and another 18.8 percent had computers without modems at home. In contrast, only 6.3 percent of respondents with annual household incomes under \$20,000 had computers with modems, and another 9.5 percent had computers without modems.

Key Findings

- About two out of five (41.2 percent) Omaha area adults have a personal computer at home. Just under two-thirds (63.5 percent) of those home computers have modems.
- About one out of ten (9.9 percent) Omaha area adults have a fax machine at home.
- More than seven out of ten (72.5 percent) Omaha area adults have seen, read, or heard something about the information superhighway. By comparison, a Harris Poll taken three months earlier reported that 48 percent of adults nationally had seen, read, or heard about the information superhighway.
- Only about four out of ten (38.6 percent) Omaha area adults who have seen, read, or heard something about the information superhighway said they understand what it is "very well" or "quite well."
- If the library had a computer available to access the information superhighway, about three out of five (59.3 percent) Omaha area adults who have seen, read, or heard something about the information superhighway said they would use it.

Respondents with school-aged children at home were more likely to have personal computers than respondents without school-aged children at home. About three out of five respondents (60.4 percent) with children aged 6 to 18 at home had personal computers. Roughly one-third (33.1 percent) of respondents without children aged 6 to 18 at home had computers.

Table 1 shows the percentage of adults with computers and modems at home by age, race, sex, education, household income, and presence of school-aged children.

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 finding that 41.2 percent of respondents had a personal computer at home suggests that the Omaha area is similar to the nation in this regard. A Harris Poll taken of a nationally representative sample of adults in July 1994 reported that 34 percent had a personal computer at home.

Fax Machines at Home

About one out of ten respondents (9.9 percent) said they have a fax machine at home.

Presence of a home fax machine among respondents varied by age, sex, education, and household income. There was no significant variation by race.

Home fax machines were most prevalent among respondents aged 25 to 49 and least prevalent among respondents aged 65 and over. Men were more likely than women to report having a fax machine at home.

The likelihood of having a fax machine at home increased with educational attainment and with household income. Nearly one in five (18.8 percent) respondents with an annual household income of \$50,000 or more had a fax machine at home compared to 2.2 percent of respondents with annual household incomes under \$20,000.

Table 2 shows the percentage of adults with a fax machine at home by age, sex, education, and household income.

Familiarity with and Understanding of the Information Superhighway

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 asked respondents if they are familiar with the information superhighway and, if so, how well they understand what it is. The two questions on this subject were identical to those used by The Harris Poll in April 1994. This provides a basis for comparing Omaha area adults' knowledge of the information superhighway with that of adults nationally.

Familiarity with the Information Superhighway. All respondents to the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 were asked, "Have you seen, read, or heard anything about the so-called information superhighway?" Just over seven out of ten (72.5 percent) said that they have.

Familiarity with the information superhighway varied by whether there was a personal computer at home as

Table 1. Omaha Area Adults Having a Personal Computer (with/without Modem) at Home

Respondent Characteristics	Percent of Respondents			
	With Computer, Total	With Computer and Modem	With Computer, no Modem	Without Computer
Total (N=800)	41.2	26.2	15.0	58.8
Age (N=793):				
18-24	32.0	16.5	15.5	68.0
25-34	46.9	33.0	13.9	53.1
35-49	54.0	34.4	19.6	46.0
50-64	40.7	24.3	16.4	59.3
65 and over	13.3	5.3	8.0	86.7
Race (N=765):				
White	42.4	27.0	15.4	57.6
Black	22.9	14.6	8.3	77.1
Sex (N=800):				
Male	47.8	32.7	15.1	52.2
Female	35.2	20.1	15.1	64.8
Education (N=797):				
Less than high school	30.4	19.7	10.7	69.6
High school diploma only	26.4	15.8	10.6	73.6
Some college only	38.6	23.8	14.8	61.4
College graduate	60.0	39.3	20.7	40.0
Household Income (N=718):				
Under \$20,000	15.8	6.3	9.5	84.2
\$20,000-29,999	33.3	19.4	13.9	66.7
\$30,000-49,999	47.7	26.8	20.9	52.3
\$50,000 and over	63.8	45.0	18.8	36.2
Children 6 to 18 in Household (N=799):				
Yes	60.4	36.1	24.3	39.6
No	33.1	22.0	11.1	66.9

Table 2. Omaha Area Adults Having a Fax Machine at Home

Respondent Characteristics	Percent of Respondents	
	With Fax Machine	Without Fax Machine
Total (N=799)	9.9	90.1
Age (N=792):		
18-24	8.7	91.3
25-34	13.8	86.2
35-49	13.0	87.0
50-64	7.4	92.6
65 and over	1.7	98.3
Sex (N=799):		
Male	13.8	86.2
Female	6.3	93.7
Education (N=796):		
Less than high school	1.8	98.2
High school diploma only	5.6	94.4
Some college only	8.6	91.4
College graduate	17.1	82.9
Household Income (N=718):		
Under \$20,000	2.2	97.8
\$20,000-29,999	6.3	93.7
\$30,000-49,999	9.9	90.1
\$50,000 and over	18.8	81.2

well as by age, race, sex, education, and household income. Respondents who have a personal computer at home were more likely to have seen, read, or heard about the information superhighway than respondents without a personal computer at home. By age, familiarity was highest among persons aged 25 to 49 and lowest among persons aged 65 and over. A higher proportion of Whites than Blacks said they are familiar with the information superhighway. Likewise, familiarity with the information superhighway was higher among males than females. Familiarity with the information superhighway increased as education and income increased.

Table 3 shows the percentage of adults who have seen, read, or heard anything about the information superhighway tabulated by presence of a home personal computer, age, race, sex, education, and household income.

Adults in the Omaha area appear to be at least as familiar with the informa-

tion superhighway as adults nationally, if not more so. According to The Harris Poll, in April 1994 only 34 percent of adults in a nationally representative sample said they had seen, read, or heard anything about the information superhighway. The Harris Poll asked a similar question in July, 1994 at which time 48 percent said they are familiar with the information superhighway. As indicated earlier, 72.5 percent of Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 respondents said they have seen, read, or heard something about the information superhighway—nearly 25 percentage points higher than the national figure measured by The Harris Poll in July. The difference may be attributable to a higher familiarity with the information superhighway among Omaha area adults, an increase in familiarity generally between the time of the second Harris Poll (July) and the time of the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 (October), or a combination of the two.

Understanding of the Information Superhighway. While more than seven out of ten respondents to the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 were familiar with the term “information superhighway,” fewer than half of those persons had a good understanding of what it is. The 72.5 percent of respondents who said they are familiar with the information superhighway were asked, “How well do you understand what the information superhighway is—very well, quite well, not very well, or not at all well?” In response, 14.7 percent said they understand it “very well,” 24.0 percent said “quite well,” 43.8 percent said “not very well,” and 16.9 percent said “not at all well.” (A small number, 0.7 percent, said they are not sure.) Results were similar to those obtained nationally by The Harris Poll in April 1994.

Not surprisingly, understanding of the information superhighway among respondents familiar with the term varied according to whether they have a personal computer at home. About half (48.8 percent) of those familiar with the term who have a personal computer at home said they understand the information superhighway either “very well” or “quite well.” Among those familiar with the term who do not have a personal computer at home, only about three out of ten (29.0 percent) said they

understand the information superhighway either “very well” or “quite well.”

Understanding of the information superhighway among respondents familiar with the term also varied by age, sex, education, and household income. By age, understanding (either “very well” or “quite well”) of the information superhighway was highest among persons aged 25 to 34 and lowest among persons aged 50 and over. Men familiar with the information superhighway reported a greater understanding of what it is than women. Likewise, understanding of what the information superhighway is increased as education increased and as household income increased.

Table 4 shows how well adults who have seen, read, or heard anything about the information superhighway understand what it is. Results are tabulated by presence of a personal computer at home, age, sex, education, and household income. There was no significant difference in understanding of the information superhighway by race.

Demand for Library Access to the Information Superhighway

The 72.5 percent of respondents familiar with the information superhighway were also asked, “If the library had a computer available to access the Internet (Information Superhighway), how likely would you be to use it—very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely?” About one out of five (21.2 percent) said “very likely;” 38.1 percent said “somewhat likely;” 17.5 percent said “somewhat unlikely;” and 23.3 percent said “very unlikely.”

The likelihood of Omaha area adults to use the library to access the information superhighway varied by age, sex, education, and presence of school-aged children. Younger adults reported a higher likelihood than older adults. Among respondents aged 18 to 34, 69.5 percent said they would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to use a library computer to access the information superhighway. Among respondents 65 and older, the corresponding percentage was 35.0. Men reported a slightly higher likelihood than women. Persons with education beyond high school reported a higher likelihood than per-

Table 3. Omaha Area Adults Who Have Seen, Read, or Heard Anything About the Information Superhighway

Respondent Characteristics	Percent of Respondents
Total (N=800)	72.5
Personal computer at home (N=800):	
Yes	85.8
No	63.2
Age (N=793):	
18-24	69.9
25-34	79.6
35-49	79.9
50-64	68.1
65 and over	51.7
Race (N=765):	
White	74.1
Black	60.4
Sex (N=800):	
Male	83.1
Female	62.7
Education (N=797):	
Less than high school	51.8
High school diploma only	56.0
Some college only	74.6
College graduate	90.2
Household Income (N=718):	
Under \$20,000	59.7
\$20,000-29,999	66.7
\$30,000-49,999	80.8
\$50,000 and over	85.3

Table 4. How Well Omaha Area Adults Who Have Seen/Read/Heard About the Information Superhighway Understand What It Is

Characteristics of respondents who have seen/read/heard about the Information Superhighway	Percentage who understand what it is				
	Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all well	Not sure
Total (N=580)	14.7	24.0	43.8	16.9	0.7
Personal computer at home (N=580):					
Yes	20.1	28.6	36.7	14.1	0.4
No	9.4	19.5	50.5	19.5	1.0
Age (N=573):					
18-24	6.9	31.9	45.8	15.3	0.0
25-34	21.2	28.2	35.9	13.5	1.3
35-49	16.2	24.6	44.5	14.1	0.5
50-64	10.9	13.0	50.0	26.1	0.0
65 and over	8.1	19.4	46.8	24.2	1.6
Sex (N=580):					
Male	20.0	30.9	33.8	14.4	0.9
Female	8.1	15.4	56.2	20.0	0.4
Education (N=580):					
Less than high school	17.2	6.9	44.8	31.0	0.0
High school diploma only	9.1	16.5	52.1	21.5	0.8
Some college only	13.9	20.1	46.4	18.7	1.0
College graduate	18.1	33.9	36.7	10.9	0.5
Household Income (N=534):					
Under \$20,000	6.0	18.1	50.6	22.9	2.4
\$20,000-29,999	15.9	23.8	42.9	17.5	0.0
\$30,000-49,999	12.9	26.6	48.2	12.2	0.0
\$50,000 and over	19.9	27.4	38.7	12.9	1.1

NOTE: Rows may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

sons with only a high school education or less. Persons with children aged 6 to 18 at home reported a higher likelihood of using the library to access the information superhighway than did persons without school-aged children at home.

Table 5 shows how likely adults who have seen, read, or heard anything about the information superhighway said they would be to use a library computer, if available, to access it. Results are tabulated by age, sex, education, and presence of school-aged children at home. There was no significant difference in likelihood of using a library computer to access the information superhighway by race, household income, or presence of a personal computer at home.

Endnote

1. Comparison across racial/ethnic groups reports differences only between Whites and Blacks. Other racial/ethnic groups were included in the survey and are reported in the totals. However, the number of respondents in these other groups was too small for separate analysis.

Table 5. How Likely Omaha Area Adults Who Have Seen/Read/Heard About the Information Superhighway Would be to Use a Library Computer to Access it if Available

Characteristics of respondents who have seen/read/heard about the Information Superhighway	Percentage who would be likely/unlikely to use library computer access			
	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
Total (N=567)	21.2	38.1	17.5	23.3
Age (N=560):				
18-24	26.8	45.1	15.5	12.7
25-34	17.8	50.7	15.8	15.8
35-49	27.1	34.0	18.1	20.7
50-64	14.6	32.6	15.7	37.1
65 and over	15.0	20.0	23.3	41.7
Sex (N=567):				
Male	26.0	36.9	14.1	23.1
Female	15.3	39.6	21.6	23.5
Education (N=567):				
Less than high school	17.9	28.6	10.7	42.9
High school diploma only	14.3	31.1	23.5	31.1
Some college only	25.1	36.0	17.7	21.2
College graduate	21.7	45.2	14.7	18.4
Children 6 to 18 in Household (N=567):				
Yes	24.4	41.7	18.9	15.0
No	19.6	36.4	16.8	27.1

NOTE: Rows may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Community Contact with the University of Nebraska at Omaha

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The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 asked respondents a series of questions which addressed their contacts with the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Because the Omaha Conditions Survey is a telephone interview of individuals, this report only measures a part of this contact: attendance at UNO classes or UNO-sponsored events. There are many other ways Omaha residents have contact with UNO. For example, businesses receive technical assistance from UNO's faculty and staff, UNO provides student teachers to Omaha area schools, and UNO faculty and staff provide service to organizations throughout the area.

People attend colleges or universities for a variety of reasons. Two reasons addressed by the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 were related to employment and income.

UNO Attendance

The first set of questions addressed the academic contacts of the individual respondent with UNO. Table 1 shows

that overall, 28.1 percent of the respondents said that they had taken courses at UNO. Assuming there were 417,000 residents over the age of 18 in the Omaha metro area at the time of the survey, this means that 117,000 adults living in the Omaha area have taken classes at UNO.

The survey also asked whether respondents had received a degree from UNO. Of the persons who had attended UNO, 26.7 percent received a degree from UNO. Approximately one out of every four (24.5 percent) of the respondents who graduated from college were graduates of UNO. This also amounts to 7.5 percent of all adults in the Omaha area. Again assuming an adult population of 417,000, approximately 31,000 Omaha area residents have at least one degree from UNO.

The majority of the graduates received a bachelor's degree (80.0 percent), while 25.0 received an advanced degree. The numbers add up to more than 100 percent because some people

received both a bachelor's and a graduate degree from UNO.

The last item in table 1 summarizes responses to the question "Are you planning to take any courses in the future?" Nearly one out of four respondents (23.6 percent) said that they were planning to take courses in the future.

Responses in table 2 are people who said they would take a class. Of these respondents 32.3 percent said that it would be an advanced degree class, and 61.4 percent said it would be an undergraduate class.

For those who had taken classes at UNO, 10.7 percent took graduate courses; 75.6 percent took undergraduate courses; and 12.9 percent took both

Key Findings

- Overall, 28.1 percent of the respondents said that they had taken courses at UNO, and 7.5 percent of all respondents are UNO graduates.
- Approximately one out of every four (24.5 percent) of the respondents who graduated from college were graduates of UNO.
- An estimated 31,000 Omaha area residents have at least one degree from UNO.
- About one third (33.4 percent) of the respondents attended at least one type of event sponsored by UNO
- More than 3 out of every 4 respondents had some contact with UNO either directly or indirectly
- When asked their overall impression of UNO, the overwhelming majority of the comments from respondents were positive.

Table 1. Academic Contact with UNO by Respondent

Question	Percent Saying Yes
Have you taken any undergraduate or advanced degree courses at UNO?	28.1
Have you received a degree from UNO?	7.5
Are you planning to take any courses in the future?	23.6
Valid cases	800

Table 2. Type of Courses for Respondents Planning to Take Courses in Future

Course	Percent
Advanced	32.3
Undergraduate	61.4
Both	4.2
Neither	1.6
Don't know	0.5
Valid cases	189

undergraduate and graduate courses (see table 3). If these percentages are based on all respondents, 3.0 percent took graduate courses; 21.3 percent took undergraduate courses, and 3.6 percent took both.

As might be expected, most people who have attended UNO have done so within the past few years. As presented in table 4, 19.6 percent of the respondents most recently attended UNO in 1994. An additional 25.5 percent last

attended sometime in the 1990s. This means that about 45 percent of the respondents who attended UNO took a class between 1990 and 1994.

The people who had not received a degree from UNO were asked how many hours they had taken. More than half (53.3 percent) had taken less than 26 hours. In other words they had not advanced beyond their first year.

UNO Sponsored Activities

Another way in which people have contact with UNO is by attending activities sponsored by UNO. Respondents were read a series of activities and asked if they had attended any of them during the past 12 months. The list of these activities is found in table 6. If they responded yes, respondents were asked how many of these activities they attended. Table 7 summarizes the results of these questions.

The most often attended type of activity sponsored by UNO was men's athletics with 11.4 percent of the respondents saying they had attended a men's athletic event last year. This was followed by activities at the Peter Kiewit Conference Center (9.9 percent) and musical events (9.4 percent). On the other hand, the least attended event that was asked was a film series, as only 1.0 percent of the respondents said they attended.

The bottom of table 6 shows that 33.4 percent of the respondents attended at least one type of activity sponsored by UNO during the past year. This repre-

sents nearly 140,000 Omaha area adults who have taken advantage of programs sponsored by UNO.

If a respondent said that they had attended an activity, they were also asked how many activities they attended. This information can be found in table 7. From the table, it can be seen that in almost every instance, the majority of respondents have only attended any one activity one or two times. On average, 76.7 percent of the respondents attended an activity one or two times and an additional 16.2 percent attended an event three to five times.

Table 3. Types of Courses Taken

	Percent of Those Attending UNO	Percent of All Respondents
Advanced degree	10.7	3.0
Undergraduate	75.6	21.3
Both	12.9	3.6
Don't know	0.9	0.3
Valid cases	225	800

Table 4. Responses to the Question: "In what year did you most recently attend UNO?"

Year	Percent of Those Attending UNO
1994	19.6
1990-1993	25.5
1985-1989	17.8
1980-1984	14.3
1975-1979	9.4
1970-1974	4.5
1960-1969	6.2
Before 1960	2.7
Valid cases	225

Table 5. Credit Hours Completed for Respondents Who Have Taken a Course But Not Received a Degree from UNO

Credit Hours	Percent
0 through 26	53.3
27 through 57	17.6
58 through 90	13.3
91 through 124	5.5
125 or more	3.6
Don't know	6.7
Valid cases	165

Table 6. Type of UNO Sponsored Activities Attended in the Last Twelve Months

Activity Sponsored By UNO	Percent Saying Yes
Workshops or conferences	4.4
UNO theater productions	5.9
Art presentations	3.9
Film series	1.0
Musical events	9.4
Visiting speakers	4.6
Women's athletics	6.4
Men's athletics	11.4
Any other activities	5.4
Activities (other than classes for academic credit) at Peter Kiewit Conference Center*	9.9
Attended at least one event	33.4
Valid cases	800

*Not all activities at PKCC are sponsored by UNO. The question did not ask respondents to differentiate between those that were and those that were not.

Table 7. Number of Times Attended Each Type of UNO Sponsored Activity for Respondent Who Had Attended Activity in Last Twelve Months

Activity Sponsored By UNO	1-2	3-5	6 or More	Total
Workshops or conferences	75.8	24.2	0.0	100.0
UNO theater productions	93.6	6.4	0.0	100.0
Art presentations	83.9	12.9	3.2	100.0
Film series	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Musical events	81.1	13.5	5.4	100.0
Visiting speakers	88.9	5.6	5.6	100.1
Women's athletics	66.7	19.6	13.7	100.0
Men's athletics	58.9	27.8	13.3	100.0
Any other activities	77.5	10.0	12.5	100.0
Activities (other than classes for academic credit) at Peter Kiewit Conference Center*	78.5	16.5	5.1	100.1
Mean events attended	76.7	16.2	7.2	100.1

*Not all activities at PKCC are sponsored by UNO. The question did not ask respondents to differentiate between those that were and those that were not.

UNO Contact by Family and Friends

Another way in which people have contact with UNO is through family and friends. Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 also asked each respondent a series of questions about the academic contact with UNO by their spouse, children and friends.

The first question asked whether they have a spouse who either is attending UNO, has attended UNO or will attend UNO. Although only 2.3 percent of the respondents said their spouse was attending UNO at the time of the interview, 10.5 percent said that their spouse had attended, and an additional 3.6 percent indicated that their spouse will attend UNO. In total, therefore, 16.4 percent of the respondents had a spouse who had some academic contact with UNO. Furthermore, table 8 shows that 4.1 percent of the respondents reported having a spouse who graduated from UNO.

Table 8. Spouse's Academic Contact with UNO

Response	Percent of Respondents
Is attending	2.3
Has attended	10.5
Graduated	4.1
Will attend	3.6
None of the above	45.5
Not married	36.5
Don't know	1.5
Valid cases	800

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their children's academic contact with UNO. These questions were asked only of persons with children but the reported percentages are for all respondents. (Nearly 70 percent of the respondents said that they had children.)

Table 9 shows that 5.1 percent of the respondents currently have children attending UNO; 13.5 percent have children who have attended UNO in the past; and 6.3 percent of all respondents reported that they had at least one child who had graduated from UNO. When asked if they have any children who will probably attend UNO in the future, 14.8 percent said they did.

Finally respondents were asked if they knew anyone who is currently attending UNO. Looking at table 10, 60.5 percent answered that they did know someone attending UNO.

Table 9. Children's Academic Contact with UNO

Response	Percent of Respondents
Graduated	6.3
Currently attending	5.1
Have attended in the past	13.5
Will probably attend in the future	14.8
Valid cases	800

Table 10. Responses to the Question: "Do you know someone who is currently attending UNO?"

Percent saying yes	60.5
Valid cases	800

Summary of Contacts with UNO

The above discussion analyzes a variety of ways in which individuals can have contact with UNO either directly or indirectly through family and friends. Table 11 presents a summary of these contacts. The most direct contact is when the respondent takes courses at UNO, and 28.1 percent have taken courses at UNO. If contacts are expanded to include spouses and children, 45.1 percent of the respondents reported that they or one of their family members have attended UNO. Broadening the definition to include the respondent, family members, and acquaintances who are currently taking classes, the percentage of contact grows to 73.1 percent. If we finally add respondents who have attended activities, we find that 77.3 percent of the Omaha area residents have attended UNO, have a family member who has attended UNO, knows someone who is currently attending UNO, or has gone to an activity sponsored by UNO. In other words, more than three out of

every four Omaha area residents had some contact with UNO either directly or indirectly.

Table 11 also summarizes the information concerning UNO graduates. As presented earlier, 7.5 percent of the respondents stated they graduated from UNO. When family members are included, 15.6 percent of the respondents said they or a spouse or child graduated from UNO.

Although not shown in any of the tables, the items described above also were compared across characteristics of the respondents. In general, there was no difference in contacts by race or gender. The largest differences were by age and income, with contacts generally higher for persons in the 25 to 49 age group and for persons in households with higher incomes.

Table 11. Summary of Contacts with UNO

	Percent of Respondents
Respondent has attended UNO	28.1
Respondent or family member has attended UNO	45.1
Respondent or family member has attended UNO or acquaintance is attending UNO	73.1
Respondent or family member has attended UNO, acquaintance is attending UNO, or respondent has attended UNO sponsored activity	77.3
Respondent graduated from UNO	7.5
Respondent or family member graduated from UNO	15.6
Valid cases	800

Overall Impression of UNO

A final question concerning UNO asked respondents to give their overall impression of UNO. These results can be found in table 12. The question was open-ended with categories developed after the surveys had been completed. Up to three answers were coded for each respondent. Most people had an impression of UNO, as 734 respondents answered the question.

When reading table 12, it is important to remember that respondents were not read a list of choices, they simply were asked to state their overall impression of UNO. Moreover, they were not asked to rate UNO's quality or evaluate any of its programs.

Looking at table 12, it can be seen that the overwhelming majority of the comments were positive. However, many of them were not specific and were difficult to interpret.

Of the ten most frequent comments, seven described the quality of UNO. The most common response was that UNO was good (33.8 percent of the respondents). Another 11.4 percent said UNO was great or excellent, 9.9 percent said UNO was good, 8.6 percent said it was average or okay, 6.7 percent said UNO was like it, 6.0 percent said UNO was pretty good, 5.7 percent said UNO was attractive, 5.4 percent said UNO had improved, 4.2 percent said UNO was fine, 3.7 percent said UNO had grown, 3.3 percent said UNO was impersonal, 2.8 percent said UNO was an impersonal campus, 2.7 percent said UNO needed dorms, 2.2 percent said UNO was an Omaha asset, 2.0 percent said UNO needed parking, 1.9 percent said UNO was nice, 1.8 percent said UNO was not traditional or commuter campus, 1.8 percent said UNO had competition with UNL, 1.7 percent said UNO was too expensive, 1.6 percent said UNO had a good business program, 1.5 percent said UNO needed engineering, 1.4 percent said UNO had family or friend at UNO, 1.2 percent said UNO had poor instructors, 1.2 percent said UNO had good instructors, 1.2 percent said UNO was too small or crowded, 1.1 percent said UNO was reasonably priced, 1.1 percent said UNO had variety or diversity, 1.1 percent said UNO had poor athletics, 0.8 percent said UNO was not liked, 0.7 percent said UNO had other unfavorable comments, 0.7 percent said UNO had too much politics, 0.7 percent said UNO mentioned medical school, 0.4 percent said UNO had not improved, 0.4 percent said UNO was user friendly campus, 0.4 percent said UNO was too big, 0.4 percent said UNO had a good library, 0.3 percent said UNO had good athletics, 0.3 percent said UNO had a good aviation program, 0.3 percent said UNO was compared to Metro, 0.3 percent said UNO had changed, 0.3 percent said UNO had attended events.

Table 12. Overall Impression of UNO

Comment	Percent of Respondents
Good	33.8
Great or excellent	11.4
Very good	9.9
Average or okay	8.6
Like it	6.7
Pretty good	6.0
It's attractive	5.7
Improved	5.4
Fine	4.2
It's grown	3.7
Impersonal campus	3.3
Other comment	2.8
Needs dorms	2.7
Omaha asset	2.2
Needs parking	2.0
Nice	1.9
Not traditional or commuter campus	1.8
Competition with UNL	1.8
Too expensive	1.7
Good business program	1.6
Needs engineering	1.5
Have family or friend at UNO	1.4
Poor instructors	1.2
Good instructors	1.2
Too small or crowded	1.2
Reasonably priced	1.1
Variety or diversity	1.1
Poor athletics	1.1
Don't like it	0.8
Other unfavorable comment	0.7
Too much politics	0.7
Mentioned medical school	0.7
Hasn't improved	0.4
User friendly campus	0.4
Too big	0.4
Good library	0.4
Good athletics	0.3
Good aviation program	0.3
Compared it to Metro	0.3
It's changed	0.3
Attended events	0.3
Valid cases	734

said it was very good, and 8.6 percent said it was average or okay. There were other nonspecific terms describing aspects of UNO, such as pretty good, fine, and nice which totaled 12.1 percent.

Another impression noted by 5.7 percent of the respondents is the attractiveness of UNO's campus. Respondents also mentioned that UNO has improved (5.4 percent) and grown (3.7 percent). The most mentioned negative comment was that UNO is an impersonal campus (3.3 percent).

Although the survey did not ask respondents to rate the quality of UNO, we can combine comments that seem to describe quality. When asked to give their overall impression of UNO, a total of 55.1 percent of the respondents said UNO was good, very good, or excellent. Another 20.7 percent said it was average, pretty good, fine, or nice. In contrast, no one described UNO as below average, poor, or bad.

Comparing change, 5.4 percent said UNO has improved, while 0.4 percent said it hasn't improved. The same percentage of respondents (1.2 percent) stated that UNO had good instructors or had poor instructors. On the other hand, more people mentioned poor athletics (1.1 percent) than good athletics (0.3 percent).

Impact of College Degree on Employment and Income

There are many reasons why people attend college. Two of them are related to employment and income. When asked if their job required a college education, 28.2 percent of the employed respondents said that it did (table 13). Even though a college degree may not be required, an additional 43.0 percent of the employed respondents said that it would be helpful or very helpful (table 14).

Table 13. Responses to the Question: "In your current job, is a college degree required?"

	Percent of Employed Respondents
Yes	28.2
No	70.8
Don't know	1.0
Valid cases	582

Table 14. Responses to the Question: "In your current job, would a college degree be very helpful, helpful, or not at all helpful?"

	Percent of Employed Respondents
Very helpful	12.4
Helpful	30.6
Not at all helpful	26.6
Don't know	2.2
Valid cases	582

Table 15 compares incomes for all respondents, college graduates, and UNO graduates. In comparing incomes, only categories of incomes are used because this was how the information was collected by the survey. It is important to remember that this income for the entire household and not the individual.

Looking at table 15 it is apparent that the impact of a college degree is highest at the upper and lower income levels. Specifically, 19.4 percent of all households had incomes less than \$20,000, but only 5.7 percent of the college graduates fell in this category. On the other hand, 19.4 percent of all households had incomes over \$60,000, compared to 36.1 percent of the college graduates. There are no statistically significant differences between all college graduates and UNO graduates.

Table 15. Total Household Income

Amount	Percent of All Households	Percent of College Graduates
Under \$20,000	19.4	5.7
\$20,000 to \$29,999	17.5	11.0
\$30,000 to \$39,999	18.1	16.7
\$40,000 to \$59,999	25.6	30.4
Over \$60,000	19.4	36.1
Valid cases	718	227

Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, and Self-Employment

by

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Labor force was a major focus topic of the Omaha Conditions Survey:1993 and Omaha Conditions Survey:1990. In those years the survey contained a block of employment questions designed to profile the Omaha area labor force in detail. The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 did not include a block of detailed employment questions. The 1994 survey did, however, include a few basic questions about the respondent's employment status.

Because the Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 used an abbreviated set of questions to measure concepts such as labor force participation and unemployment, results are not strictly comparable with those from 1993 and 1990. With that limitation in mind, the Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 still measured adult labor force participation and unemployment rates very similar to those reported by the Omaha Conditions Survey:1993. Thus, the Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 tends to corroborate the findings of the earlier survey for those measures.

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is typically defined as the percentage of persons 16 years and older who are either working or looking for work. The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 included questions from which to estimate the labor force participation rate for persons 18 years and older.

The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 measured labor force participation among Omaha area adults at 77.7 percent. The previous year, the Omaha Conditions Survey:1993 reported a similar adult labor force participation

rate—78.3 percent. This is about 10 percent higher than the national average.

Not surprisingly, 1994 survey results show that labor force participation varies by age, sex, education, and income. Labor force participation ran 92.2 percent for persons aged 18 to 49, 72.4 percent for persons aged 50 to 64, and 20.0 percent for persons aged 65 and older. Men had a labor force participation rate of 87.0 percent compared to 69.0 percent for women. Respondents with higher levels of education had higher levels of labor force participation, and those with higher labor force participation had higher levels of income.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate is typically defined as the percentage of the labor force (persons 16 years and older either working or looking for work) that is unemployed. The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 included questions from which to estimate the unemployment rate for persons 18 years and older.

The Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 measured unemployment of the Omaha area adult labor force at 1.5 percent. The official unemployment rate for the four-county area was 2.6 percent at the time the Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 was conducted. The previous year, the Omaha Conditions Survey:1993 measured unemployment at 2.9 percent. All three figures point to the fact that the Omaha area enjoys a very low level of unemployment.

Self-Employed

Respondents with jobs were asked whether they were self-employed or worked for someone else. About one in ten respondents with a job (11.3 percent) said they were self-employed. This, too, was similar to the figure reported earlier by the Omaha Conditions Survey:1993 (13.8 percent).

Summary

The Omaha Conditions Survey:1993 Labor Force Profile concluded, "The Omaha area has an unusually high labor force participation rate and an unusually low unemployment rate. This means that a larger-than-average share of area adults are in the labor force, and the vast majority of them have been successful in finding some kind of employment." Results from the Omaha Conditions Survey:1994 provide additional evidence in support of that conclusion.

Survey Methodology

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 was conducted through telephone interviews with adults from a random sample of area households. The sample represents adults in the Nebraska portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Cass counties).

This report describes the sampling and interview process used to conduct the 1994 Omaha Conditions Survey. Also discussed are error and confidence levels, respondent characteristics, and comparability of 1994 results with those of prior years

Sample

The survey sample consists of 800 completed interviews. Telephone numbers were selected for the sample using a modified random digit dialing design. The design allows for the inclusion of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers in the sample.

Respondent Interviews

Professional interviewers from Wiese Research Associates conducted the interviews between October 10 and November 11, 1994.

After making contact with someone at a telephone number on the call list, interviewers asked to speak with a person who was 18 years or older and had the next birthday in the household. Interviewers asked for the adult with the next birthday to avoid biasing the sample in favor of persons more likely to be at home or to answer the phone. Interviewers were instructed to call back if the correct household member was not available.

Respondents were promised that their responses would remain confidential. In addition, any respondents concerned about the legitimacy of the survey were given the telephone number of the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research.

Completed survey questionnaires were returned to the CPAR for processing. Data entry was done by Priority Data Systems. Computer programming, data cleaning, and analysis was done by CPAR.

Error and Confidence Levels

As with all sample surveys, the Omaha Conditions Survey results are assumed to contain some degree of error. The reliability of sample survey results depends on the degree of care exercised during survey administration, the sample size, the extent to which the sampling frame corresponds to the population under study, and the amount of nonresponse.

Survey Administration. Errors can creep into the data in a number of ways during survey administration. For example, respondents may misunderstand questions, interviewers may misunderstand or misrecord answers, and data entry operators may miskey results into the computer. The extent of such errors cannot be estimated. CPAR researchers made every effort to minimize the potential for these types of errors throughout the survey process, and their effect on the results of the Omaha Conditions Survey is probably very small.

Sample Size. Another source of error stems from using a sample of persons to estimate the characteristics of a population. How large a difference is there likely to be between the results of the sample survey and the results one would obtain from interviewing the entire population? This difference, or sampling error, can be estimated for a random sample using accepted statistical techniques.

The sample has a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. In other words, there is a 95 percent likelihood that the true value of an item is no more than 3.5 percent higher or lower than the value reported.

This estimate of sampling error assumes a random sample—that is, all members of the population under study had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. However, telephone surveys can violate the basic assumption of randomness because the sampling frame does not correspond perfectly to the population and because of nonresponse.

Sampling Frame. The sampling frame is the list of units from which the sample is drawn. Ideally, the sampling frame consists of all units in the population under study. In practice such a list is rarely available, so a list that approximates the ideal is often used. This is the case with the Omaha Conditions Survey where the population under study is adults in the Omaha area and the sampling frame is a list of telephone numbers. As a consequence, not all Omaha area adults had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. Instead, a person's probability of being included in the sample varied depending on how many telephone numbers served the person's residence and how many adults lived there.

Persons living in households without telephones had no chance of inclusion in the survey sample. The exclusion of persons without telephones can result in the underrepresentation of certain groups, particularly minority, low income, low education, young, and more mobile persons within the area. According to the 1990 Census, 3.0 percent of households in the 4-county area did not have telephones.

Persons living in households with multiple telephone numbers had a greater chance of inclusion than persons living in households with single telephone numbers. An earlier Omaha Conditions Survey (1990) found that 8.3 percent of respondents in Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington counties had multiple telephone numbers. An analysis of the responses in 1990 found no significant differences between persons

with multiple telephone numbers and those with only one telephone number.

A person's probability of being interviewed also varied according to the number of adults in the household. For example, a single adult whose telephone number was selected would be interviewed with certainty. An adult living with another adult whose telephone number was selected would have a 1 in 2 chance of being interviewed, an adult living with 2 other adults would have a 1 in 3 chance, and so on.

Nonresponse. Survey nonresponse is the failure to obtain measurements on sampled units. This occurs when an eligible individual is unable or unwilling to complete the interview. This type of error is probably the most difficult to work with since the characteristics of nonrespondents are typically unknown.

Respondent Characteristics

The exclusion of households with no telephones, overrepresentation of households with multiple telephone numbers, overrepresentation of adults in one-adult households, and nonresponse all affect the reliability of the survey results to some degree. One way to handle this problem would be to assign weights to the data to compensate for the over or underrepresentation of any sub-groups. However, no current, reliable data exist for this task.

Absent any mechanism for weighting the survey results, one can assess the representativeness of the sample by comparing characteristics of the sample to known characteristics of the population.

Table 1 compares age, race, sex, and income characteristics of the survey sample to those of adults in the same

geographic area reported by the 1990 Census.

For the most part, the percentage of survey respondents in each demographic category corresponds closely with population percentages measured by the 1990 Census. The exception is in household income where the sample appears slightly underrepresented in the lowest income category and overrepresented in the highest. At least part of the reason for this may be that low-income households are less likely to have telephones. Another reason may be that the Census figures report 1989 income and the Omaha Conditions Survey reports 1994 income; one would expect some percentage increase the higher income categories due to inflation over time.

Comparability with Prior Omaha Conditions Surveys

Differences in geographic coverage and seasonality affect comparison of 1994 Omaha Conditions Survey results with those from prior years.

The 1994 and 1993 surveys include Cass County while earlier surveys do not. This reflects the addition of Cass County to the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area in December 1992.

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 was conducted in the fall; in 1993 the survey was conducted in the summer and in 1991 and 1990 it was conducted in the winter. The season during which the survey is conducted may affect responses to some items such as opinions on schools and roads as well as labor force characteristics.

Readers should consider these differences when making comparisons of Omaha Conditions Survey results over time.

Table 1. Comparison of Sample with 1990 Census Data for Four-County Area for Selected Characteristics

	Survey Sample, 1994		1990 Census	
	Number*	Percent	Number	Percent
A. Total Persons 18 Years and Older	800		401,295	
B. Persons by Age:				
18-24	103	13.0	57,237	14.3
25-34	196	24.7	103,383	25.8
35-49	239	30.1	116,551	29.0
50-64	135	17.0	66,871	16.7
65 +	120	15.1	57,253	14.3
C. Persons 18 Years and Older by Race and Hispanic Origin:				
White, not Hispanic	717	90.2	354,033	88.2
Black, not Hispanic	48	6.0	31,909	8.0
American Indian, not Hispanic	5	0.6	1,745	0.4
Asian, not Hispanic	6	0.8	4,067	1.0
Other, not Hispanic	5	0.6	114	0.0
Hispanic	14	1.8	9,427	2.3
D. Persons 18 Years and Older by Sex:				
Male	385	48.1	191,188	47.6
Female	415	51.9	210,107	52.4
E. Total Households	800		208,988	
F. Households by Household Income:				
\$0-9,999	37	5.2	26,093	12.5
\$10-14,999	44	6.1	17,713	8.5
\$15-24,999	123	17.1	39,274	18.8
\$25-34,999	124	17.3	36,032	17.2
\$35-49,999	172	24.0	42,002	20.1
\$50,000+	218	30.4	47,874	22.9

*Sample numbers may not sum to totals due to missing data.



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